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ABOUT MONEY & OTHER THINGS

MM-C-63

ABOUT MONEY

AND OTHER THINGS

A Gift-Book

£3930
ac.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN'

MM.C-63
Craik, Dinah Maria

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK
1886

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PREFACE

I HAVE been often asked to reprint these papers, by those who believe the public will still listen to one who even now counts nearly two generations of readers.

This little volume may give, to a few more, a laugh—which is good; a tear—which is sometimes better; a serious thought or two—which is best of all. Therefore I offer it as a Christmas remembrance from an old friend, who has lived for sixty, and written books for forty years.

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ABOUT MONEY

We are apparently passing through—let us hope only passing through—a cycle of very hard times. From the large landowner, who has to reduce his rents twenty or thirty per cent, to the dock-labourer, glad to get a charity breakfast, price one penny, all of us, workers and non-workers, are suffering. The list of the unemployed extends through every class, beginning with those who are the purveyors of luxuries rather than necessaries. The artist cannot sell his pictures; the author finds publishers disinclined for new books; while, with some striking exceptions, during the past season concert-rooms have been painfully empty, and theatres difficult to keep

open except at serious risk. Meanwhile, business men say that never has trade been so bad or its prospects so gloomy.

Is this only a temporary crisis? or a warning of that decadence which comes to all nations

'When wealth accumulates, and men decay'—

the beginning of the end, which is gradually to make of London a Nineveh—a city of desolation? Who can say? Or is it, as some say, 'the struggle between labour and capital'—whatsoever that may mean, and to whatever it may tend?

I have lately been re-reading, with unabated admiration, that wonderful novel, Thackeray's *Newcomes*, and, closing it, I was struck by the fact that the keynote of the book is Money—its use and abuse, the want of it, the craving for it, the carelessness or contempt of it. From the outset, when the Newcome family originated by allying itself

to a wealthy widow, to the last chapter, when Ethel uses Lady Kew's hoards to repay the not quite imaginary wrong done by her uncle to the Campaigner—money is at the core of everything; the root of all evil, the source of all good. Ethel's pitiful voluntary slavery to her worldly old grandmother, her own sacrifice of Clive, and that of Lady Clara to her brother Barnes—in fact, the general victimisation of good people by bad, which is the leading *motif* of the story, all originate in money. Nay, the dear old Colonel himself, with his childish carelessness and culpable ignorance in the matter of L. S. D., is, in spite of his virtues, really the cause of half the misery of the book. He allows himself to be fleeced by his contemptible brother-in-law; he helps, not honest folk only, but those lovable prodigals, F. Bayham and Jack Belsize; he tries to win Ethel for Clive by pecuniary chicanery which no honest son

ought ever to have accepted, and no true-hearted girl have been influenced by; and finally, in the affair of the Bundelcund Bank, he recklessly squanders not only his own property but that of other people, whose ruin he most assuredly causes by his innocent idiocy, just as much as if he had been the greatest swindler alive. Yet he is exalted into a hero—we weep over him, and never think of condemning him; and I know I shall be considered the most hard-hearted wretch alive if I dare to say that I would not for the world have had Colonel Newcome as father, uncle, husband, or confidential friend! And why? Because he was deficient in the one point, the pivot upon which society turns —the right use and conscientious appreciation of money.

In this he is not alone. It may seem another piece of heresy to promulgate, but very few men know how properly to use

money. They can earn it, lavish it, hoard it, waste it; but to deal with it wisely, as a means to an end, and also as a sacred trust, to be made the best of for others as well as themselves, is an education difficult of acquirement by the masculine mind; so difficult, that one is led to doubt whether they were meant to acquire it at all, and whether in the just distribution of duties between the sexes it was not intended that the man should earn, the woman keep—he accumulate, and she expend; especially as most women have by nature a quality in which men are often fatally deficient—'the infinite capacity for taking trouble.'

The nobler sex 'can't be bothered' with minutiæ. 'What is a paltry five pounds to me?' I have heard said in excuse of its quite unnecessary expenditure, 'when every day I have to deal with hundreds and thousands.' Or, 'Why keep daily accounts? My clerks

do that. For me, I just put two or three pounds in my pocket, spend them till they are gone—and then put in two or 'three more.' I appeal to the candid masculine mind, if this is not the ordinary way of thinking, at least of those to whom Fate has kindly given the 'two or three pounds' always in pocket, without need to beg, borrow, or steal?

But this paper is no criticism of the opposite sex; I only wish to say a few words to my own, on a subject which, especially at the present crisis, concerns them most nearly—the subject of money.

Unsentimental, unheroic, some will say unchristian, as it may sound, our right or wrong use of money is the utmost test of character, as well as the root of happiness or misery, throughout our whole lives. And this secret lies not so much with men as with us women. Instead of striving to make our-

selves their rivals, would it not be wiser to educate ourselves into being their helpmates? Not merely as wives, but as daughters, sisters, —every relation in which a capable woman can help a man, and an incapable one bring him to ruin? Especially on that particular point—money.

I know that I shall excite the wrath or contempt of the advocates of the higher education of women, when I say that it is not necessary for every woman to be an accomplished musician, an art-student, a thoroughly educated Girton girl; but it is necessary that she should be a woman of business. From the day when her baby fingers begin to handle pence and shillings, and her infant mind is roused to laudable ambition by the possession of the enormous income of threepence a week, she ought to be taught the true value and wise expenditure of money; to keep accounts and balance

them; to repay the minutest debt, or, still better, to avoid incurring it; to observe the just proportions of having and spending, and, above all, the golden rule for every one of us, whether our income be sixpence a week or twenty thousand a year—*waste nothing.*

May not the growing disinclination of our young men to marriage arise partly from their dread, nay, conviction—alas, too true! —that so few of our young women have been thus educated, and that far from being help-meets to the men they marry, they will be an expense, a hindrance, and a continual burthen? Without wishing to defend the selfish young bachelor who waits till he is 'in a position to marry,' which means till he has had enough of the pleasures of freedom and finds them begin to pall,—I have often seen with pity a young fellow who has never had occasion to think of anybody but himself—and never has done it—learning by hard experience the

endless self-sacrifices demanded of a pater-familias; good for him no doubt, but none the less painful. Often when going out of London about 9 A.M., and meeting whole trainfuls—is there such a word?—of busy, anxious-looking men hurrying into London, I have said to myself, 'I wonder how many of these poor hard-worked fellows have wives or sisters or daughters who really help them, take the weight of life a little off their shoulders, expend their substance wisely, keep from them domestic worries, and, above all, who take care of the money? 'But for my wife I should have been in the work-house,' is the secret consciousness of many a man; and it is a curious fact that while many a woman makes the best of a not too estim-able husband, no power on earth can save from ruin a man who has got an unworthy or even a foolish wife. He cannot raise her, and he himself will gradually

'Lower to her level day by day,
What is fine within him growing coarse, to sympathise with clay.'

Or even if she means well, but is by nature or education what I may term 'incapable,' he finds himself saddled with not only his own share of the life-burthen, but hers. The more generous and tender-hearted he is, the more he is made a victim, both to her and to his children, till he sinks into the mere bread-winner of the family; who has his work to do, and does it, through pride, or duty, or love, or a combination of all three, usually without a word of complaint: does it till he drops. Men have a great deal of error to answer for, but the silent endurance of many middle-aged 'family men,' to whom—often, alas! through the wife's fault—domestic life has been made a burthen rather than a blessing, ought to be chronicled by the Recording Angel with a tear—not of com-

passion, but admiration—enough to blot out many a youthful sin.

It is to prevent this—to try and make of our girls the sort of wives that are likened unto Lemuel's mother: 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her; she will do him good and not evil all the days of her life'—that I would urge their being given, from earliest childhood, some knowledge of business, especially about money. Ten years old is not too soon to begin this, or to entrust them with the responsibility of an income, however small, which will prepare them for larger responsibilities in time to come.

For I hold, as the wise legislators of the Married Women's Property Act must have held, that every woman who has any money at all, either earned or inherited, ought to keep it in her own hands, and learn to manage it herself, exactly as a man does.

There is no earthly reason why she should not. A girl can learn arithmetic just as well as a boy. Ordinary business knowledge and business habits are just as attainable by her as by him. To be able to keep accounts, to write a brief, intelligent 'business letter,' and to accustom herself to exactitude and punctuality, is as easy and as valuable to a girl in her teens as to a youth in an office or a young man at college. Only, everybody expects it of him—nobody of her; and nobody attempts to teach her how to do it.

What is the result? She enters life as an 'unprotected female,' neither forewarned nor forearmed. While single and young, even if deprived of father, uncle, or brother, she rarely lacks some kindly male adviser, to whom she gives no end of trouble, hanging helpless on his hands, and constantly asking him to do for her what she ought to have learnt to do for herself. A position, interest-

ing of course, but a trifle humiliating, as well as unwise. For, with the best intentions, a man gets tired of being perpetually 'bothered' by an ignorant and feeble woman; like the unjust judge, he will do anything to get rid of her and her 'much speaking.' He gives hasty or rash advice; she follows, or half follows it, and sometimes lives bitterly to regret that she did so. Or else, trying to think and act for herself, and having neither knowledge nor capacity to do so, she falls into irretrievable muddle, if not absolute ruin.

What pitiful stories do we hear of single women, young or old, who have lost their all 'through too much faith in man'—some relative or friend, perhaps a knave, but more commonly only a fool, to whom they have lent money; or some trustee from whom they have innocently received a yearly income, never making the slightest inquiry as

to where it came from, or whether the investments were safe, until some sudden collapse shows it to have vanished entirely. Such cases are as endless as the misery they cause. Yet hearing of them, one almost ceases to pity the victims, in condemning their egregious folly.

Every girl who is not entirely dependent on her male relations—a position which, considering all the ups and downs of life, the sooner she gets out of the better—ought by the time she is old enough to possess any money, to know exactly how much she has, where it is invested, and what it ought yearly to bring in. By this time also she should have acquired some knowledge of business; bank business, referring to cheques, dividends, and so on, and as much of ordinary business as she can. To her, information of a practical kind never comes amiss, especially the three golden rules, which have very rare

exceptions—No investment of over five per cent is really safe; Trust no one with your money without security, which ought to be as strict between the nearest and dearest friends as between strangers; and lastly, Keep all your affairs from day to day in as accurate order as if you had to die to-morrow. The mention of dying suggests another necessity—as soon as you are twenty-one years of age, make your will. You will not die a day the sooner; you can alter it whenever you like; while the ease of mind it will give to yourself, and the trouble it may save to those that come after you, are beyond telling.

It cannot be too strongly impressed upon every girl who has or expects that not undesirable thing, 'a little income of her own,' what a fortunate responsibility this is, and how useful she may make it to others. Happier than the lot of many married

women is that of the 'unappropriated blessing,' as I have heard an old maid called, who has her money, less or more, in her own hands, and can use it as she chooses, generously as wisely, without asking anybody's leave, and being accountable for it to no one. But then she must have learnt from her youth upwards how to use it, she must not spare any amount of trouble in the using of it, and she must console herself for many a lonely regret—we are but human, all of us!—with the thought that she has been entrusted with it, as a faithful steward of the Great Master. Such an old maid often does as much good in her generation as twenty married women.

And if she does marry—what then? The old notion was that man being the superior animal, when a woman married she became absorbed in her husband, and everything she possessed was his, unless guarded from him

by a cumbrous machinery of settlements, which, presupposing him to be a bad man, were, if he happened to be a good one, rather irksome. Gradually society discovered that men and women, though different, are equal, and that therefore it was desirable to recognise their separate identity, and to make marriage, financially, a partnership with limited liability. By recent laws a married woman is, as regards her property and a good many of her rights, just as free as if she were single. And no honest, honourable man, no wise and tender husband, would wish it otherwise. It makes no difference at all to those who truly love and trust each other, while to those who do not it is a certain protection on both sides. No real union can be affected by it; while in those marriages where the sentimental notion of 'one flesh' is a mere sham, to keep up the pretence of union is worse than folly. When

the ship is going down we trouble ourselves little enough about the style of the cabin furniture.

Therefore, nowadays, when a man marries a woman with money—and why should he not, since love is more precious than gold?—he has only to leave it, as the law leaves it, entirely in her own hands, thereby saving his pride, and removing all questions as to his motive in choosing her. That saddest lot of a woman of property, to be sought by fortune-hunters, while honest, proud men stand aloof, is thus safely avoided.

But a step below heiresses are many women who either have or earn a moderate income, which is an exceeding help to their husbands, if the wives are left free to manage and expend it, and really know how to do so. That they so seldom do know is the great curse of social life. A single woman, however incapable, careless, extravagant, can

only harm herself; a married woman can be the ruin of a whole family. Far more so even than a man, against whom a sensible woman can sometimes stand as a barricade, counteracting his folly—nay, often his errors. But a man has no barricade against his wife. She can drag him down with her to the very depths of misery and humiliation, and he will let himself sink—and sink silently, out of either honour or pride, or both, rather than blame her, or let the world see how bitterly he blames himself for marrying her.

I can imagine nothing more pitiable than the waking up of an honest, true-hearted young fellow, who finds his angel a commonplace, silly, helpless woman, whom he can neither trust nor control, yet is obliged to make the nominal mistress of his household, secretly taking all its burthens on himself in addition to his own. Not perhaps that she is a bad woman, but simply an ignorant and

thoughtless one, of the tribe of 'careless virgins,' who, as wives, are the destruction of men. And one of the worst of women, not being actually criminal, is she who has no sense of the value and use of money, which when she gets it 'burns a hole in her pocket;' who never keeps accounts, having 'no head for figures,' or finding it 'too much trouble.' Consequently, even with the best intentions, she wastes as much as she spends, consoling herself on the easy principle that 'it doesn't matter; Mr. So-and-So pays for everything.' As he does, God help him! and chiefly for that one false step which made him tie himself for life to a charming, agreeable, perhaps even lovable, fool!

But if she is not a fool, and he really can trust her, he had better do so, not only with her own money, but his. I do not mean that he should become the proverbially good husband, whose wife every Monday morning

puts a sovereign in his pocket, 'with strict injunctions never to change it;' but that he should trust her with his affairs, and above all tell her exactly what income he has, and how he thinks it ought to be spent. If she is a sensible woman, the chances are she will spend it far more wisely and economically than he will. Very few men have the time or the patience to make a shilling go as far as it can: women have. Especially a woman whose one thought is to save her husband from carrying burthens greater than he can bear; to help him by that quiet carefulness in money matters which alone gives an easy mind and a real enjoyment of life; to take care of the pennies, in short, that he may have the pounds free for all his lawful needs, and lawful pleasures too.

Surely there can be no sharper pang to a loving wife than to see her husband staggering under the weight of family cares; worked

almost to death in order to dodge 'the wolf at the door;' joyless in the present, terrified at the future; and yet all this might have been averted if the wife had only known the value and use of money, and been able to keep what her husband earned; to 'cut her coat according to her cloth,' for any income is 'limited' unless you can teach yourself to live within it; to 'waste not,' and therefore to 'want not.'

But this is not always the woman's fault. Many men insist blindly on a style of living which their means will not allow; and many a wife has been cruelly blamed for living at a rate of expenditure unwarranted by her husband's means, and which his pecuniary condition made absolutely dishonest, had she known it. But she did not know it; he being too careless or too cowardly to tell her, and she not having the sense or courage to inquire or to find out. Every mistress of a

household—especially every mother—*ought* to find out how much the money is, and where it comes from; and thereby prevent all needless extravagance. Half the miserable or disgraceful bankruptcies that happen never would happen, if the wives had stood firm, and insisted on knowing enough about the family income to be able to expend it proportionately; to restrain, as every wife should, a too-lavish husband; or, failing that, to stop herself out of all luxuries which she cannot righteously afford. Above all, to teach her children a tender carefulness that refuses to mulct 'the governor' out of one unnecessary halfpenny, or to waste the money he works so hard for in their own thoughtless amusements.

If the past generation was too severe upon its offspring, and often killed off the weakest of them by a mistaken system of 'hardening,' the present one errs in an opposite direction.

Paterfamilias, whose father put him in an office at sixteen, and kept him there with only a fortnight's holiday per annum, now sends his boys to school till eighteen, and then to college; gives them yachting, cricketing, walking tours and Continental travels; denies nothing to either them or their sisters, but works for them till he drops; and then—where are they?

It is to prevent this—to counteract the creed of feminine subservience and blind obedience, to make the woman man's help and not his hindrance—that I would have our girls taught to claim their real 'rights' and exercise their best 'female franchise'—freedom to stand on their own feet, and, be they single or married, to take their affairs into their own hands, especially their financial affairs. A person who is careless about money is careless about everything, and untrustworthy in everything. It is your despised prudent folk to whom the

rashly generous, indifferent, and thoughtless, come in the end for all that makes life worth having, and plead: 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.' But why were they allowed to go out?

Yet there is such a thing as ignoble economy, as well as noble extravagance. She who stints her servants in wages and food; who goes shabbily clad when her station and her means require her to please the world and her family by being dressed at all points like a lady; who worries herself and her friends by trying always to save when she can well afford to spend, is deserving of the severest blame. Money is meant not for hoarding, but for using; the aim of life should be to use it in the right way—to spend as much as we can lawfully spend, both upon ourselves and others. And sometimes it is better to do this in our lifetime, when we can see that it is well spent, than to

leave it to the chance spending of those that come after us. Above all, let us guard against the two crying errors of the female nature —a prudence which degenerates into mere 'worrying,' and an economy which becomes culpable narrowness.

To teach the girls of the generation—alas! the grown women are beyond teaching!—I have written these pages, trying to put the question of money in its true light; that it is not the root of all evil (unless planted by evil hands), but, wisely dealt with, the source of all good—at least, the helper in all good; bringing, when rightly used, an easy mind, a quiet conscience, the power of benefiting others, and, at any rate, of saving oneself from being a burthen to others.

To be able to earn money, or, failing that, to know how to keep it, and to use it wisely and well, is one of the greatest blessings that can happen to any woman, as well as to the

man, be he father, brother, or husband, with whom her lot may be cast. Single or married, she will always have the power in her hands—that divinest power a woman can possess—to make those about her happy. Her husband, if she has one, will be 'praised in the gates,' for he is saved half the troubles and humiliations of other men. He never wants money, or has to work himself to death to earn it, for whatever he earns, she keeps and makes the best of. Be their income large or small, she has the strength and the self-denial to limit their expenses accordingly. She never shrinks from saying to every member of her family—husband included—and to the world outside as well—'We cannot afford it.' Therefore that horrible incubus of 'keeping up appearances' is for ever removed both from her and from him. The ideal household is that which is exactly what it seems.

And for the woman that has no husband —no one either to help her or control her— well, the advantages and disadvantages often balance each other. She can do as she likes with her own; if she has no sympathiser, at least she has no hinderer, either in her pleasures or her duties—most of all in her charities. Her money, which otherwise might have been only a pang, can thus be made into a blessing. And if she must go down to the grave alone—what woman is ever quite alone who has the will and the power to do good wherever she goes? whose strength is in herself, and whose aim it is to die as she has lived—a help to all and a trouble to no one?

SIX HAPPY DAYS

IN A HOUSE-BOAT

I HAD long heard of the house-boat, and had once seen it. It lies, summer after summer, moored in a tiny bay on our river Thames; and twice it had been offered to me for a week's occupation by its kindly owner, but I never was able to go. When at last I found I could go, I was as ready to 'jump for joy'—had that feat been possible—as any of you young people.

To live in a house-boat on the broad river, with a safe barricade of water between you and the outside world—to fish out of your parlour door, and, if you wanted to wash your hands, to let down jugs with a

string from your bedroom window; moreover, to enjoy unlimited sunrises and sunsets, to sleep with the 'lap-lap' of a flowing stream in your ears, to waken with the songs of birds from the trees of the shore —what could be more delightful? Nothing, except perhaps 'camping out' under the stars, which might also be a trifle damp and uncomfortable.

But there was no dampness here. And there was more than comfort — actual beauty. When I went down to look at it, in early spring, and the kind owner showed it with pride—pardonable pride — I found the house-boat adorned with Walter Crane's drawings and William Morris's furniture; most æsthetic in its decorations, and as convenient as a well-appointed yacht. Also, there was a feeling about it, as if the possessor loved it, and loved to make people happy in it. Mottoes from Shakspeare,

Shelley, Keats, Milton, were in every room, and tiny pictures on every wall, besides the perpetual pictures outside—a gallery of ever-changing loveliness.

I came home full of enthusiasm, and immediately set about choosing 'a lot of girls,' as many as the boat would hold, to share it with me. Only girls; any elderly person, except the inevitable one, myself, would, we agreed, have spoiled all. I did not choose my girls for outside qualities, though some of them were pretty enough too—but for good temper, good sense, and a cheerful spirit; determined to make the best of everything, and face the worst—if necessary. These were the qualities I looked for—and found.

I shall not paint their portraits nor tell their names, except to mention the curious fact that three out of the six were Katherines. We had, therefore, to distinguish them as Kitty, Kath, and Katie, the latter being our

little maid-of-all-work — our coachman's daughter. The other three were our young artist, whose name is public property, and two others, neither literary nor artistic—but, for reasons needless to explain, specially *my* girls—whom I shall accordingly designate as Meum and Tuum. All were between fifteen and twenty-five—happy age! and all still walked 'in maiden meditation fancy free,' so we had not a man among us!—except our sole protector, Katie's father, whom I shall call Adam, after Shakspeare's Adam in *As You Like It*, whom he resembles in everything but age.

Six girls afloat! And very much afloat they were, swimming like ducks—no, let us say swans—on a sea of sunshiny felicity. As we drove from our last railway station—Maidenhead—our open omnibus, filled with bright-faced damsels, seemed quite to interest the inhabitants. Reaching the open

country, that lovely Thames valley which all English artists know, our ringing laughter at every small joke startled the still July afternoon, and made the birds dart quickly out of the hedgerows. . . Such hedgerows they were! full of wild roses, pink and deep red, honeysuckle, traveller's joy, and countless other flowers.

'There it is! There is the house-boat!' cried Kitty, who had seen it before, having been with me when we investigated it domestically a few weeks before.

'Hurrah! we have nearly reached it—our 'appy 'ome,' exclaimed Meum and Tuum, standing up in the carriage together. Two of the Katherines followed their example; indeed we must have looked a most ill-behaved party, only fortunately there was no one to see us, except one labourer lazily sitting on a mowing machine which was slowly cutting down all the pride of the

flowery meadow through which we drove to the river side.

There she lay, the *Pinafore*, and beside her the *Bib*, a little boat, which was to be our sole link between the *Pinafore* and the outside world. In it sat the owner, who had patiently awaited us there two hours, and whose portrait I should like to paint, if only to show you a bachelor—an old bachelor you girls would call him—who has neither grown selfish nor cynical, who knows how to use his money without abusing it, and who does use a good part of it in making other people happy.

The *Pinafore* is his hobby. He built it on the top of a barge, under his own directions, and from his own design. It consists of a saloon at one end, combination kitchen and dining-room at the other, and four cabins between, with two berths in each. A real little house, and

well might we call it our happy home—for six days.

Our host showed us all over it once more, pointed out every possible arrangement for our comfort, partook of a hasty cup of tea, and then drove back in our empty omnibus Londonwards, deeply commiserated by us whom he left behind in his little Paradise.

The first meal! Its liveliness was only equalled by the celerity with which it was despatched, for we were frightfully — no, wholesomely hungry. And then came several important questions.

'Business before pleasure! Choose your room-mates, girls, and then arrange your rooms. It is the fashion on board the *Pinafore* to do everything for yourselves. When all is ready we will take a row in the sunset, and then come back to bed.'

Which would have been a pleasant busi-

ness, if some of them had had to sleep in beds of their own making!

'Ma'am,' said Katie, who was beside me when I peeped into one cabin, which was one confused heap of mattresses, blankets, pillows, and sheets—'hadn't I better do the rooms myself? The young ladies don't quite understand the way of it.'

Katie, the best of little housemaids, was heartily thanked, and her offer accepted. 'But, girls, remember it is for the first and last time. After to-night you must learn to do your rooms yourselves.'

So we threw overboard the practical for the poetical, and, like Hiawatha, went sailing towards the sunset, in dreamy delight.

What a sunset it was! The river with its flowery banks, rushy islands, and tree-fringed back-waters, was dyed all colours, according to the changing colour of the sky. Such green mounds of trees, dark woods on

either side! everything full of rich summer life, from the stately pair of swans sailing about, with their six gray cygnets after them, to the water-hen scuttling among the reeds, the willow-wren singing among the bushes, and the wary rat darting into his hole as we passed. All was beauty and peace.

> 'The cares that infest the day
> Did fold their tents, like the Arabs,
> And silently steal away.'

My five girls could all handle an oar, and how they did enjoy their row! The two youngest took it by turns, and at least succeeded in 'catching crabs' with much dexterity and hilarity.

On and on, till we were stopped by a lock —the three evils of the Thames are locks, weirs, and lashers. So we turned, and let ourselves drift back with the current. Now and then we 'hugged' the bank, and

gathered thence a huge handful of purple loosestrife, blue and white bugloss, meadow-sweet, and forget-me-not; or we floated over great beds of water-lilies, yellow or white, which grew on a quiet little back-water, where we nearly got stranded in a shoal and pierced with a snag. But 'a miss is as good as a mile,' said we, and were more careful another time.

The sun had long set, and the moon was setting—the young moon, like a silver boat—when we re-entered our 'happy home' for supper and bed; the second speedily following the first, for various excellent reasons, one being that the supper-table was required for Adam's couch. We gave him his choice whether to sleep on it or under it, and he preferred the latter, as being 'more like a four-poster.' Adam is by nature almost as silent as his horses, but his few remarks, terse, dry, and shrewd, often pass into family proverbs.

So all the *Pinafore's* crew sank into repose, except one, who has an occasional bad habit of lying awake 'till the day breaks and the shadows flee away.' How gloriously it did break, that dawn on the Thames! and how strange were the river sounds—the chirping of birds and the lowing of cattle mingling with other mysterious noises, afterwards discovered to be the tapping of swans' beaks against the barge, and the clatter of the water-rats careering about underneath it. Nevertheless at last sleep came, and with it the power to face and enjoy another new day.

A holiday is never the worse when there runs through it a stratum—a very thin stratum—of work. So the two working-bees, author and artist, decided to be put ashore after breakfast and left under two trees, with their several tasks, while the others enjoyed themselves, till dinner-time, when we ex-

pected friends who were to row about ten miles to spend the day with us.

Dinner reminds me of our domestic commissariat—which, considering that food for eight or ten hungry people does not grow on every bush, was important. Groceries and other stores we brought with us, but bread, milk, butter, fruit, and vegetables, we had to get from the inn opposite, which also sent us our meat ready-cooked, it being impossible to roast a joint on board the *Pinafore.* Fresh water too we had to get from the inn pump, river water not being wholesome for drinking. Great fun were those voyages to and fro, for we were all thirsty souls, and all, even Adam, teetotallers. The amount of water and milk we got through was such that some one suggested it would save trouble to fetch the cow on board.

The kindly landlady bade us 'gather our fruit for ourselves,' so we often brought home

a boat-load of valuable food—potatoes, peas, crisp lettuces pulled up by the roots and eaten as rabbits eat them; also raspberries, cherries, and currants. It was almost as good as shooting or fishing one's dinner. And, presently, the sight of the fish jumping up round the boat brought a sad look to Adam's amiable countenance.

'If I had but a rod and line, ma'am, I'd catch them for dinner.'

And very nasty they might have been—river fish generally are—yet politeness would have obliged us to eat them, so perhaps it was all for the best that we had no materials for the piscatory art. Adam could but watch the poor little fishes swimming innocently about, and sigh that fate prevented him from catching them.

After a mirthful day our guests departed, and, to rest their arms, my five girls decided to stretch their legs and take a walk on

shore. 'Let's have a race,' said the biggest and the most beautiful. As she tucked up her skirts she looked a real Atalanta. The second in height, and only a trifle less in grace and activity, did the same, and off they started, up what seemed a solitary road, when lo! suddenly appeared two young Oxford men, book in hand! What they thought of the apparition of these two fair athletes, and the three other girls behind, all of whom collapsed suddenly into decorum, will never be known. But I doubt if they read much for the next ten minutes.

The race thus stopped, we thought we would go into the village churchyard, where two old men were soberly making hay of the grass cut over the graves. Thence we passed into a quiet wood, and finally came home—hungry, as usual—to supper.

And so concluded our second day.

No, not concluded. About eleven P.M.

there happened a most dramatic incident. A sudden and violent bump caused the *Pinafore* to shake from stem to stern. We all woke up. Some declared they heard a voice exclaim, 'Hallo, Bill! where are you going to?' and others vowed there was a mysterious rattling at what we entitled our 'front door.' Adam was vehemently called, and he and his mistress, in rather hasty toilettes, carefully examined every corner; but all was safe. Then we looked out, in case there had been an accident, but nothing could be seen. The river flowed on, empty, dark, and still.

Quiet being a little restored, I entered the cabin where five maidens, all in nocturnal white, stood congregated together, in a group not unlike the daughters of Niobe, and took their evidence. However, as the mystery, whatever it was, could not be solved, we all went to bed. And Adam having, with his usual cautious fidelity, poked into every place

that a thief, or even a fly, could enter, made the brief remark, 'Pirates,' and retired again to his—table.

The only result of this remarkable episode was that about eight the next morning, finding a solemn silence in the cabins instead of the usual tremendous chatter, I went to look at my girls, and found them all five lying fast asleep, 'like tops.' As it was a pelting wet morning, with the wind blowing after a fashion which required all one's imagination to make believe that our dwelling was quite steady, this infringement of my Mede-and-Persian rule—eight o'clock breakfast—was less important. But I said remorselessly, 'My dears, this must never happen again.' Nor did it.

Their laziness lost my girls the great excitement of the day. A sudden outcry from Adam of 'The boat! the boat!' revealed the alarming sight of our little *Bib* having got unmoored, drifting away calmly at her own

sweet will down stream! For a moment Adam looked as if he intended to swim after her, then changed his mind and halloed with all his strength. Female voices despairingly joined the chorus; for at this hour, and on such a wet morning, there was not a soul to be seen at the hotel garden or the ferry. What would become of us, moored helplessly a good distance from the shore, and our boat away? A last agonising shout we made, and then saw a man rush out, evidently thinking somebody was drowning. He caught the position — and the boat, which in another minute or two would have drifted past the little pier, jumped into her, and brought her back to us in triumph.

After this we settled down, thankful that things were no worse—though there began a dreary downpour and a wind that rattled every door and window of our frail dwelling. The girls' countenances fell.

Now, though the happiest days of my life are spent among young people, I have always found that a certain amount of law and order is as good for them as for myself, else we get demoralised. So instead of mournfully hanging about wondering when it would clear up, and what we should do if it didn't clear up, I set everybody to do something. Two cleaned the bedrooms and exulted over the dust they swept away, another wrote home letters, and a fourth gave us delightful music on the harmonium. The artist had, of course, her own proper work, which filled her whole morning. And when about noon the sky cleared, and grew into a lovely July day, breezy and bright, with white clouds careering about, we felt we had really earned our felicity.

Still it was too stormy to row much, so we landed, and investigated the shore on either side. First the Abbey, beside which was the hotel and its farmyard, splendid haystacks

almost touching the ancient ruins, which date from the time of King John. Then, after the important interval of tea, came a long walk on the opposite bank, where, protected from the wind by three umbrellas, the party sat admiring the scene, and themselves making a charming picture, *not* painted at present. And lastly, as if to reward our cheerful patience, after sunset the wind sank, and lo! high up in the clear west, in the midst of a brilliant sunset, sat the crescent moon.

'We must have another row!' And so we had, until twilight melted into dark, and, quite tired out, we went to bed content.

The third morning came, and by eight o'clock the house-boat was as noisy as a magpie's nest. We had arranged for a long expedition, with a boatman who knew each lock, weir, lasher—every danger on the river. Leaving to him all the care of the voyage, we determined to enjoy ourselves thoroughly.

Our morning row was delightful, but brief, since the girls and the boat had to sit for their portraits, the young artist afterwards putting in herself—from memory—sitting at the bow. But we had scarcely reached home when down came the rain in torrents. I had warned my girls of this, having read in the *Times* that a 'depression' was travelling over from America—all our bad weather does come from America—but of course they didn't believe it. Even now, though the sky was a leaden gray, and the river too, bubbling all over with the sheets of rain which pelted on our flat roof; though our 'front garden' and 'back garden'—as we called the spaces at the two ends of the barge—were soaking with wet, my five girls would hardly believe in their hard lot.

'It must, it will clear!' persisted they; but it did not clear—for six mortal hours.

We soon ceased to lament, and rejoiced

that we were safe under cover. We made the best of our afternoon—we read, we drew, we played games; then we took to music, and sang, or tried to sing, some catches and rounds. Finally our eldest girl gave us Mendelssohn on the little harmonium, and our youngest, in her clear, fresh, pathetic voice, sang us Schubert's songs from *Wilhelm Meister*, till a boat-load of soaked, white-jacketed youths was seen to stop under the opposite bank, listening to the Lurlei-like strains. (N.B.—I hope we did not cause their deaths from rheumatic fever.)

But the worst times come to an end, if you can only wait long enough. By seven P.M. we looked out on a cloudless sky and a shining river. Ere we started for another sunset row, Adam said briefly, 'There's fish for supper, ma'am.' He too had utilised the wet day, and behold! a dozen small dace, caught by some fishing tackle he had borrowed,

were swimming in a bucket, alike indifferent to the hook they had swallowed and the prospect of being speedily fried.

Adam's pride in his piscatory exploit was a little lessened an hour after, when we found him, with mingled laughter and anxiety, gazing after a majestic swan, which had swallowed the baited hook, and then swam away, carrying rod and line away also. It took a long chase to recover both, but they were recovered; and so, we concluded, was the swan, for he reappeared shortly after as lively as ever, and ate the food we threw out to him with his usual dignity and grace.

These swans are the pride and ornament of the Thames. They belong to the Thames Conservancy Corporation, and no one is allowed to molest or destroy them. They sail about like kings and queens, followed by their families, and are petted and fed and

admired till they become quite tame. It was our great amusement to collect them round the boat, and get them to eat out of our hands, and their graceful motions were a delight to behold.

The last of our six happy days had now come, at least our last whole day—Friday. We resolved to make the most of it, by going up the river in the forenoon and down in the afternoon, taking with us a frugal meal of bread and butter, milk and cherries, also the towing rope, in case rowing up stream should be too difficult and too long a business. There is a towing-path all the way along the Thames, at one side or other, and we used often to see a young man, or even a girl, or sometimes both, amicably harnessed together, pulling along a whole boatful of people with the greatest ease. We thought the towing, if necessary, would be great fun for the after-dinner row.

Our morning row was a failure, being much too 'genteel.' The river flowed between civilised shores, dotted with splendid villas. Its banks were elegantly boarded in for promenades, its very boat-houses were palatial residences. No osiers, rushes, and lovely water plants; the very water-lilies looked cultivated. We agreed that our own bit of river was much the best, and that not a single house-boat—we passed half a dozen at least—was half so pretty or so commodious as our *Pinafore*. Content and hungry, we came back to it, determined to eat our dinner in ten minutes, and be off again; but fate intervened.

'Listen! that's surely thunder! And how black the river looks! It is bubbling, too, all over! Hark!'

Crash, crash, and down came the rain, regular thunder rain, continuing without a moment's pause for three hours. Drenched

boat-loads of unlucky pleasure-seekers kept passing our windows, struggling for the hospitable inn opposite.

'Still, yesterday evening was lovely; this evening may be the same,' said the girls, determined to keep up their spirits. And when at last the rain did actually cease, and a bit of blue sky appeared—'enough to make a sailor's jacket'—they set to work baling out and drying the boat, protesting the while that the occupation was 'delightful.'

Fortune favours the brave. The little *Bib* had been so thoroughly soaked that, work as we might, it was seven o'clock before we were able to start; but that last row was the loveliest we had. Such a sunset! such views! of osier beds, and islands of tall rushes, and masses of woodland, and smooth, green parks with huge century-old trees, and noisy weirs, and dark, silent locks!

We had now grown fearless, or desperate, and determined to go through two locks, which was accomplished without any accident. On—on we rowed. Some of us would have liked to row on for ever, drifting contentedly down the rapid stream. But motherly wisdom, seeing the sun fast sinking and the twilight darkening, insisted on turning homewards, and was obeyed.

Only once, when the crimson sunset reflected in the river from behind a fringe of low trees, made a picture too lovely to resist, our artist implored to be 'dropped,' as was her habit when she saw anything desirable to sketch; which being impossible at that hour, we compromised by 'lying to' for half an hour, while she painted, or tried to paint, in the dim light. She worked, and we sang; a quantity of old songs, duets, and glees. In the pauses the corncrake put in his note from the shore, and one or two

other birds wakened up with a sleepy chirp; then all sank into silence, and there were only the quiet river and the quiet sky, up which the crescent moon was sailing, brighter and brighter.—I think, however long my girls may live, and whatever vicissitudes they may go through, they will never forget that night.

For it was not evening but actual night when we reached our 'appy 'ome.' Adam was anxiously watching—since besides his mistress and her girls, his own young daughter was on board with us.

'Did you think anything had happened—that we were all drowned?'

'Yes, ma'am, I did,' said he briefly.

Poor Adam, shut up in his floating prison, had evidently not spent the happiest of evenings. But we had; and—it was our last.

About eleven or so, when the magpie's

nest had all sunk into silence, I saw the loveliest moon-set. The large bright crescent close upon the horizon shone in a cloudless western sky, and was reflected in the river, with a gulf of darkness between. After watching it for several minutes, determined not to go to bed till I had seen the last of it, I went back into my cabin, and took up a book — *Essays*, by Miss Thackeray. One 'On Friendship' interested and touched me so much that I read on to the end—then started up and rushed to the window. It was too late. My moon had set! Only a faint circle of light in the sky, and another fainter still on the river, showed where she had been.

So I went to bed, a little sad at heart and vexed with myself for having missed the lovely sight by about a minute, after having sat up an hour on purpose to watch it. Too late, too late! Why cannot one

always do, not only the right thing, but at the right time?

My girls had apparently discovered this secret. Long before I was stirring, though we old birds are usually early birds, I heard a great clatter and chatter in the parlour or saloon. It was our two 'little ones,' broom in hand, with their dresses tucked up, cleaning and sweeping, throwing about tea leaves, taking up rugs, dusting tables and chairs, washing china, and in short fairly turning the house, or house-boat, out of the windows. The delighted laughter with which they watched the dirt and *débris* sail down the river, a floating island of rubbish, was quite infectious. Even when I summoned them to breakfast, they declined to come.

'No, no, we can't eat anything till we have done our work. We are determined to leave the house-boat as clean and tidy as we found it.'

With which noble sentiment I entirely coincided.

After breakfast there were the cabins to be put in order, and all the packing to be done. It was eleven before we felt free to enjoy ourselves, and then the sky looked so threatening that I protested against the long expedition which had been planned. Suppose it rained—in fact it had rained a little—and we all got wet through and had to start for our long railway journey in damp clothes without any possibility of drying ourselves. So, in deference to the prudent mother, who never denied them anything she could help, the good girls cheerfully gave up their expedition, and we spent a delightful hour or two in paddling about close at home and gathering water-lilies.

This last proceeding was not so easy as it looked. Water-lilies have such thick strong stalks, and grow in such deep water,

that in plucking them one is apt to overbalance the boat, especially if fully laden. We had to land half of our crew on an osier island, while the others floated about, guiding themselves with the boat-hook, and cautiously grasping at the dazzling white blossoms and platelike leaves which covered the surface of the water for many yards. A risky proceeding it always is—gathering water-lilies; but when gathered, what a handful—nay, armful—of beauty and perfume they are!

We got back not a minute too soon; and had scarcely sat down to dinner, our last dinner—at which we laughed much, perhaps to keep up our spirits—when flash! crack! the storm was upon us—and a more fearful thunderstorm I never saw. The river was one boiling sheet of splashing rain; the clouds were black as night; between them and the water the forked lightning danced;

and once, when after a loud clap of thunder, a column of white smoke burst out from the wood opposite, we felt sure the bolt had fallen.

For two whole hours the storm raged; and then, just as we were wondering if the wagonette would venture to come for us, and how we should accomplish our seven miles' drive without being drenched to the skin, the rain ceased, the blue sky appeared, and the world looked and felt—as the world feels after the thunderstorm in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony.

And so, with contented, thankful hearts, although a little melancholy, and with the very tune of the reapers' Thanksgiving song out of the said symphony ringing in our ears, we left our sweet little house-boat and our beautiful Thames — and went our several ways homeward.

'We may never in all our lives have six

such happy days,' said one of the girls mournfully.

Which is very possible; but, ought we not to be glad that we ever had them at all?

LIFE AND ITS WORTH

A LAY SERMON

LATELY, wandering alone on a wild sea-shore, I was overtaken by a benevolent-looking elderly gentleman, who addressed me with great politeness: 'Ma'am, I have been watching you some time; you walk very feebly.' (I owned placidly the sad but long-accepted fact.) 'Will you take this? A free gift—like salvation.'

It was a tract, of which the title, 'Home, sweet Home,' touched me in a half-comical, half-pathetic way; so I accepted it, and we walked on amicably together, discussing the scenery, the weather, and so on, exclusively mundane and commonplace topics, for I

felt that on other points we should wholly disagree. At first I had thought my friend belonged to the Salvation Army; afterwards I concluded he was only an ordinary religious enthusiast, and we parted with mutual good wishes. Some days after, finding his tract in my pocket, I read it.

It proved to be a highly imaginative and sentimental description of that Home divine, of which, as it truly observed, 'were we indulged with a sensible display, all the duties of life would come to an end.' Whence it argued, with a somewhat hazy *non sequitur*, 'though it is too plain that earth acts too powerfully on our souls,' we ought to do our best to ignore the said 'vain world,' and aspire to the 'world of light and love.' But I need not quote further from a style of phraseology which is well known to every one, and, being dear to some, should be treated with respect by all.

The point therein which chiefly struck me was its contrast—or, rather, its similarity in difference—to certain *pronunciamenti* of the rationalistic and materialistic schools, which make heterodoxy as illiberal and dogmatic as orthodoxy, and cause the pessimism of 'Eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,' to arrive at much the same result as that ascetic or mystic optimism which, ignoring entirely 'this poor dying world,' looks solely to the next world for its satisfaction and reward. Thus the un-Christlike Christian and the resigned or indifferent sceptic meet on much the same plane, so far as this present existence is concerned, and ask each other, consciously or unconsciously, the same question—'Is life worth living?'

One answer comes from a set of 'unbelievers,' as orthodox churchgoers would call them, but whose unfaith is of the most pathetic kind. It is not that they will not, they *cannot*

believe. The spiritual sense has not been developed in them. They can no more take in the doctrines of revelation, or the possibility of any revelation at all, than a short-sighted man could see the Alps at a hundred miles off. Yet they are people of pure lives and high aspirations—Christians in spite of themselves; and it is with a sad regret rather than an angry contempt that they set aside the Christian dogmas as untenable. Life to them is an unsolvable mystery. They cannot explain what it is, whence it comes and whither it goes; but they think it should be accepted and made the best of; used nobly, and laid down calmly, each individual being merely one of a series, like the insects of a coral island, appearing and disappearing for the progressive development of the species.

There is a melancholy heroism in this theory, and yet human nature rebels against it. We long to keep our identity, and not

become mere atoms in the general mass. To most of us this present life is worth little unless we can in some way assert and maintain our individuality; and in speculating on the life to come I think the secret cry of all of us would be, 'Let me remain myself—able to meet and recognise those I love as themselves, else—in plain truth—I would not care for any after life at all.'

Therefore, though life may seem worth living, on scientific grounds, to those who believe that each generation drops, like leaves from a tree, in its decay nourishing and advantaging the generation which follows it, most of us are incapable of such philosophic self-immolation. The old-fashioned belief in heaven and hell—reward and punishment for each individual—suits the ordinary mind much better.

But do any of these—either believers or unbelievers—fairly answer the question, 'Is

life worth living ?'—A question which, strange to say, is as often asked by those who have scarcely begun to live, as by those who have exhausted life and all its pleasures, to no one's benefit, not even their own. Those who have longest borne its burthen, and upon whom that burthen has lain heaviest, seldom ask any such question. They have no need, for in tacitly accepting life, such as it is, and trying to make the best of it, they have found out its true worth. To them has been revealed the great secret, taught by the Divine Master Himself: 'The kingdom of heaven is *within you.*'

It is this 'kingdom of heaven,' the spiritual land of perpetual calm, with its atmosphere of love, peace, and purity lying far below or above all the tempestuous currents of this world, which, to my thinking, alone makes life worth living. I have seen it in people of all creeds ; and, not seldom, in people of no

creed at all; dear, blind souls, who lived and walked on earth in such an unconscious Christlike fashion, hopeless of the life immortal, that we could imagine how they will, one day,

'Wake up in glad surprise,
And in their Saviour's image rise.'

For He is their Saviour still, without their knowing it.

I ought to explain that by 'the kingdom of heaven,' I do not mean what is ordinarily termed 'salvation,' or the search after it. 'Seek ye the kingdom of God and His righteousness' is the command—and that only. For a man to seek instead his own 'salvation,' as he calls it—to spend his whole earthly life in trying for the next life how to keep out of hell and get into heaven, has always seemed to me one of the meanest creeds that any mortal creature could hold. The 'kingdom of heaven,' which we are to enter upon *in this world*, I

take to be the seeking, not after one's personal salvation at all, but after God and His will, as expressed in nature, human nature, revelation; and the accepting and obeying of it, so as to carry out, to the utmost limit that our short life allows, the good of man, for the love of God. This creed alone, if clearly understood and devoutly accepted, will make life worth living, under almost any circumstances that the human mind can conceive, except, perhaps, a complete mental overthrow.

And yet I have heard some foolish young people say, 'they did not wish to live after five-and-twenty,' and others still more madly protest that they would not live to be miserable, but, whenever fate denied them the happiness they felt to be their right, would themselves take the law into their own hands, and plunge unbidden into the—to them—impenetrable dark. With such as these it is impossible to argue. They, poor sceptics!

mistake the true aim of existence as completely as the religious egotist who imagines that the whole theogony of the universe is set in motion for the saving of his own particular soul.

But when one has passed noonday with its dazzle and glare, and the silent twilight shadows are gathering around, more and more does the conviction force itself upon us that the worth of life is—what we ourselves choose to make it. Youth resents, as a kind of wrong, anything short of perfect felicity; and is for ever attributing its ill-luck to mankind, Providence, everything and everybody but itself; Age, looking on life with larger and calmer eyes, generally sees that in most cases where it is said to be 'not worth having,' it is because the recipient has not deserved to possess it.

'Is life worth living?' 'That depends upon the *liver*,' answers the punster—which

is only too true. How many a miserable sceptic, a ruined genius, a social nuisance, or a domestic brute, has been made out of a man who, by neglecting the laws of health, literally destroyed himself and all belonging to him.

The origin of evil—let divines say what they will—is absolutely hidden from the sight of mortal eyes. This, however, we can see plain enough, if only we choose to see, that most evils (not all, but most), which at first appear the result of blind chance (I cannot believe in 'chastisements' specially inflicted upon the finite by the Infinite) may, soon or late, be traced to our infractions of those divine laws of morality, health, common sense, and justice, which have been laid down for our preservation, bodily and spiritual, during our sojourn in this world. He who breaks these laws goes against the will of God, and God can no more shield him, or, alas! his—for no one

suffers alone—from the consequence of this sin, than you, if you have told your child not to put his hand into the fire, can prevent its being burned. And he who best fulfils them is most likely to understand the worth of life, inasmuch as the one aim of his existence is—without irreverence be it spoken—the humble cry—'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.'

Yes. To do God's will, so far as we are able to discern it, seems, to all truly Christian souls—and I number among these many who are unconscious Christians—sufficient reason for our being put into life at all, and the doing of it alone makes life worth living. I can imagine a human being, who had lost all personal joys, to whom existence might yet be dear, and even pleasurable, simply from the sense of being still the servant of God—of obeying and having obeyed His commands—being content to live as long as He ordains life, or to die, which may be 'far better'; but

in no ways either ignoring or despising life, and determined not only to endure but to enjoy it, to the last limit of mortal breath.

It is for this reason, perhaps—the reason somewhat hazily put forward by the author of the tract 'Home, sweet Home'—that the Father of us all has so closely shut the gates between this world and the next. Much as we may crave for it, we are not meant to look beyond the grave. Haply, the vision would blind us to all the interests and duties of this life, which might thus appear to so many of us,—especially those to whom it has been a long walking in darkness, weariness, and pain,—as truly not worth living. But it is worth living, and we are meant to live it. Why or wherefore, is altogether beside the question.

I once heard a good and wise man, a clergyman, too, reprove a little girl who was craving after something in the future, some-

thing different from what she had. 'My child,' he said, 'you are like many people I know; you are always wanting to live next door.'

We elder folk, who have learned what a mere shadow life is — 'so soon passeth it away and it is gone'—often look with deep sadness at the young who are perpetually throwing away its blessings, wasting time, health, love, happiness, by always fancying that to-morrow will be better than to-day. Equally sad, I hold, is it to observe certain sects of stern and yet fearful Christians, who think that Christianity consists in abolishing every pleasure of this life for the sake of the life to come; making of the Infinite Love a cruel taskmaster who insists upon our loving and serving Himself alone, and regarding our present existence as altogether miserable, evil, and wretched, a mere stepping-stone to the 'joys of heaven,' whatever or

wherever that may be. Such people generally look forward to a heaven of their own inventing, which others would not wish to inhabit on any pretext whatever.

I would that clergymen, like the good man I have referred to, would cease a little to preach about 'next door'—which is as much shut to them as it is to us, except in their own imagination,—and tell us more about this present existence; its value, its blessedness, its duties, to ourselves and to our neighbours. They should try to teach us, not how to die, but how to live; 'with God in the world' (not without Him), but in the world still. Not dwelling too much upon 'another and a better world,'—which, for all we know, may not be a better to many.

And how good this world is, if we have only eyes to see it as such, and hearts that help to make it so! If we could eliminate

from it one thing, sin, our own and others', how well we could bear all else, sorrow, sickness, even death! Except death, almost everything evil in our lives can be traced to sin—sins of omission or of commission; and having discovered this, there we are obliged to leave it—the long chain of sequences into whose mystery we can never pierce. Only as far as our own life goes can we learn the inevitable truth that 'as a man soweth so shall he reap.'

Is life worth living? Surely it is, if only for the beauty of the external world, that visible perfection of Nature which we often cling to as a token of the Perfection, invisible and divine, to which we all aspire. More and more so, I think, as the years narrow in which we shall rejoice in the one, and bring us nearer to that mysterious day when we shall find out the secret of the other. There is something pathetic and yet hopeful in the

sight of an old lady tottering round her garden, delighting in her flowers as if she had fifty summers to enjoy them in, and yet she may not have another week; or an old man, looking with dim but contented eyes on the lovely landscape which he will never walk in more. We are passing away, and we know it; but the beauty we adore as our nearest and most tangible evidence of the divine perfection behind it, must, in some shape or other, be as eternal as divinity itself.

Happy they who can see it thus! it will help them to find life worth living to the very last. I remember, during another solitary wander in that lovely island to which I have referred, toiling up a steep brae; when there came up after me a lady, unknown to me as I to her, but we both turned round and smiled.

'It is very steep,' she said. From her face, I should have supposed her to be some

years nearer even than I was to that 'Home, sweet Home,' of which my other elderly friend had reminded me; and it was a face that had surely known trouble, yet had a peaceful and sunshiny look that somehow warmed one's heart.

'Yes,' I said, 'these hills are steep—I find them so—but how beautiful they are!'

'It is the clear shining after rain. Did you notice the rainbows? I think I never saw so many rainbows as I did this morning. And the mountains, just look at them! I like to watch them. They remind me of *His love.*'

It was said with the utmost simplicity—a mere chance word, yet I never forgot it. All through that peaceful time, on golden mornings, when the little island lay like a jewel set in an azure sea; of stormy afternoons, when the hilltops grew dark purple against the cloudy sky; and more than once,

in a gorgeous midnight, when every living creature was asleep, and I and the harvest moon had the world all to ourselves, in a warmth like June and a stillness so deep that the murmur of the burn, a quarter of a mile off, was distinctly heard,—there used to come back upon my mind the saying of that simple woman, and I felt 'His love.'

Nothing can come out of nothing. Whether one always sees it or not, and sometimes life is so dark that one cannot see it, His love *must*—so long as there is any sweetness, any loveliness, any joy in this world—be there.

No one, at least no one who has lived as long as I have, would attempt to ignore the agonies of life: its bitter disappointments, its cruel losses, its sufferings of mind and body: griefs that come direct from God; and others, harder to bear, that seem to come through man, anguishes needless and avoid-

able. We all know them. Each one has his own burthen to carry; the only difference is *how* he carries it; whether it crushes him, that is, whether he allows it to crush him, or not. Therefore I hold, and I repeat it once more, that the worth of life lies in a man's own hands: and, knowing this, it is piteous to see the young throwing life away, wasting time, health, love, happiness; squandering madly all these blessings which will never return, and then accusing Providence of making life not worth living.

Not long since I sat by the bedside of one who had long past the threescore years and ten of the Psalmist, and was waiting in much weariness and pain, but calmly and contentedly, for that passing 'out of one room into the next' which our great preacher as well as poet, Alfred Tennyson, speaks of. She and I were discussing this sad question of the present day, 'Is life worth living?' and I

told her how I meant to try and write some answer to it, in fact I gave her a brief outline of this my lay sermon.

She listened with deep interest to all I said, and was tenderly eager that I should write this paper, which we both knew she might never live to read.

'You and I,' I said, 'have felt more than most how hard life is; but we also feel that it is worth living.'

'Yes,' she answered, lifting herself up in bed and speaking with her own firm, clear voice, while her faded eyes shone as with the light of the unseen world, to which she was fast hastening,—'yes, quite.'

And in these feeble words of mine—which she never did read—I put forward my solemn affirmation that her faith was true.

THE STORY OF A LITTLE PIG

HE was the sweetest lamb—no, pig—that ever perished in infant bloom. As he lay on my kitchen table, white as milk from head to tail, his poor little pink eyes half-open, and his tiny feet — let us say at once his pettitoes—stretched out as if in helpless submission to destiny, my heart melted. So did the hearts of all my women servants, who gathered round him, contemplating him with an air of mild melancholy.

'He does look so like a baby!' said one. (So he did—the Duchess's baby in *Alice's Adventures*, which is by turns an infant and a little pig.)

'I don't think I *could* cook him,' remarked

the cook, a matronly and tender-hearted person, who had had a good deal to do with babies.

'And I'm sure I wouldn't eat him,' added, with dignity, the parlour-maid.

'We none of us could eat him,' was the general chorus. And they all looked at me as if I were a sort of female Herod. Evidently they had never read Charles Lamb, and were unappreciative of their gustatory blessings.

As for me, I slowly took in the difficulties of the position, and as I gazed down on the martyred innocent lying on the table—to quote a line from an old drama—I 'knew how murderers feel.'

Yet I was only an accessory after the fact. I did not kill the helpless innocent: his death happened thus. A much-valued old friend, who is always ready to do a kindness to anybody, one day offered my husband a sucking-

pig, which he refused, and the dainty was given to somebody else. Immediately afterwards, I happened to say I was sorry for this, as I liked pig.

'Then,' answered the friend, 'you shall have one — out of the very next litter. I shall not forget. It is a promise.' Which, after an interval of several months, during which I myself had entirely forgotten it, he thus faithfully kept.

A special messenger brought the present to my door, with the injunction that he was to be cooked that day for dinner (the pig, not the messenger). And — there he lay! with my sympathetic domestic circle admiring and lamenting him.

I went and gathered the collective opinion of the drawing-room. It was much the same as that of the kitchen. Several other members of the family protested that they 'didn't care for pig,' and one even went so far as

to say that if poor piggie-wiggie appeared on our table, she should be obliged to dine out.

Was ever a mistress of a family in such a quandary! What was I to do? Even though —(in common with Elia—I must own to the soft impeachment!)—even though I like pig —how could I have one cooked exclusively for my own eating? and, further, how could I eat him up myself alone? And he required, like all sucking-pigs, to be cooked and eaten immediately.

Between the dread of annoying my whole family, or the kindly friend who had wished to give me pleasure, I was in despair, till a bright idea struck me. Near at hand was a household of mutual acquaintances — a large household, who could easily consume even two pigs, and to whom my friend would, I knew, have been as glad to give pleasure as to myself.

'Pack the pig up again very carefully,'

said I, 'and let him be taken at once to Eden Cottage. They are sure to enjoy him.'

'Oh yes, ma'am.' And a smile of relief overspread the countenances of all my domestics, as piggie disappeared in great dignity, since, to save time, I sent him away in the carriage. So he departed, followed by much admiration but no regrets — save perhaps mine.

But I had reckoned without my host. Half an hour afterwards my parlour-maid presented herself with a long face.

'He has come back, ma'am.'

'Who?'

'The little pig. They say they are very much obliged, but none of the family like pork.'

'He is not pork,' I cried indignantly. A sweet, tender, lovely sucking-pig, embalmed in all classic memories, to call him common 'pork!' It was profanity.

Still something must be done, for the moments were flying. I turned to a benevolent lady visitor and told her my grief. She laughed, but sympathised.

'Will you take him?' I said hopefully. 'Indeed, he is a great beauty, and I am sorry to part with him, but if you would take him——'

'I don't think my brother cares for pig; however, some of the rest might like it,' answered the benign woman. 'So, if you are quite sure you don't want him——'

'If I wanted him ever so, I couldn't keep him. Do take him. And I hope that at least your visitors will enjoy him.'

And not until they had departed—little pig and all—did I recollect, and felt hot to the very end of my fingers, that to the remote ancestors of these, my dear and excellent friends, the ancestors of my little pig must have been the most obnoxious of food! But

when one has 'put one's foot into it,' the best thing is to let it stop there, without any attempt to draw it out. So I rested content. My pig was safely disposed of.

At his usual hour my husband entered, much amused.

'So you've got your little pig at last. M—— was so pleased about it, and so kind. It was kept on purpose for you. He put it in his carriage, drove to town with it himself, and sent it by messenger in full time to be cooked for dinner to-day. And the last word he said to me was—"Now be sure there's plenty of apple sauce, and tell me to-morrow morning how you all liked your pig."'

I listened in blank dismay. Then I told the whole story.

My husband's countenance was a sight to behold. 'Given him away! Given away your little pig! What will M—— say, after all his kindness and the trouble he took!

How shall I ever face him to-morrow morning!'

In truth it was a most perplexing position.

'There is only one thing to be done,' said my husband decisively. 'You must send and fetch the pig back immediately.'

I explained with great contrition that this was difficult, if not impossible, as he was probably just then in the very act of being roasted, six miles off.

'But can we not get him somehow or other? We *must* eat him—or at least be able to say we have eaten him. M—— will be so disappointed—quite hurt in his feelings—and no wonder. How could you do such a thing?'

I felt very guilty; but still if I had had to do it all over again, I did not see I could have done differently. And the pig was sure to be eaten and enjoyed—by somebody.

'But not by you; which was what M——

especially wished. Couldn't you manage it somehow? Why not invite yourself to dine with your friends—and the pig?'

Alas! it was, as I said, six miles off, and there was only half an hour to spare, and we had a houseful of friends ourselves that day.

'But the day after? Couldn't we drive over, fetch him back—at least what remains of him—and eat him cold to-morrow?'

This was too bright an idea to lose. But still one difficulty remained. What was to be said to our kindly friend when he asked how we had enjoyed our pig next morning?

'I declare I don't know how to face him,' said my husband, mournfully. 'After all his kindness, and the trouble he took, and the pleasure he had in pleasing you. The first question he is sure to ask is, "How did your wife like her pig?" What in the world am I to say to him?'

Crushed with remorse, I yet suggested

that 'the plain truth,' as people call it, is usually found not only the right thing but the most convenient. However, this merely feminine wisdom was negatived by the higher powers, and it was agreed that our donor should only be told that the pig was not to be eaten till to-morrow; on which to-morrow we should drive over and fetch what remained of him, so as to be able to say, with accuracy, that we had eaten him, and found him uncommonly good.

This was accordingly done. The fatal moment passed—how, I did not venture to inquire—my husband reappeared at home, and we took a pleasant drive, and presented ourselves for afternoon tea at our friends' house. They were too hospitable to show surprise, or to wonder what we had come for.

After a few minutes' polite conversation, we looked at one another to see which of us

should make the confession and put the request.

'The—the little pig?' said I at last in great humility.

'Oh, the little pig has been cooked and eaten. He turned out a great success. Some of the family enjoyed him immensely.'

'Then—is he quite finished?' I asked with meek despondency.

'I will ring and inquire. No, I think there is a fragment left of him, because my brother thought you ought to be asked to dinner to-day to eat it.'

'Perhaps I might take it home with me, were it only a few mouthfuls. We have a special reason. My husband will explain.'

Which he did, pouring out the whole story of my sins—first, in being so foolish as to say I liked a pig, then in accepting it, and lastly in giving it away.

'And if you had seen how pleased M——

was, and the trouble he took about it all,' was always the burthen of the story, till I felt as if I never could lift my head again.

But my friends only saw the comic phase of the thing. They burst into a chorus of laughter.

'It is as good as a play. You ought to write a second "Essay on Roast Pig," to transcend Elia's. Comfort yourself. You shall still have your pig, or, at least, what is left of him.'

She rang the bell, and gave her orders to the politely astonished footman, who, after a few minutes, brought back a most Medea-like message.

'Please, ma'am, cook says there's his head left, and one of his legs, and a small portion of him still remains uncooked, if the lady would like to take that home——'

'No, no, no,' said my husband hastily. 'The least little bit will do—a mere frag-

ment, just to enable her to say she has eaten it. She likes it; she was once heard to say that a little pig tasted exactly like a baby!'

Under the shout of laughter which followed this unlucky communication, which was, alas, quite true, I made my retreat. But just as I was getting into the carriage, one of the family came running hastily out.

'Stop a minute; you have forgotten something. You have left behind you your little pig.'

What a narrow escape! Not until the basket was safely deposited at my feet did I feel that I had conquered fate, gained my end and my pig; and, what was the most important element in the matter, had avoided wounding the feelings of my friend.

So we ate him—the pig, I mean—at least one of his members. Very delicious he was, fully justifying Elia's commendation of him, or rather of his race. He was also fully

appreciated by a mutual friend of the donor and ourselves, who happened to dine with us that day, and upon whom we impressed the necessity of stating publicly that she had eaten this identical pig in our house.

Peace to his manes! Let him not perish unchronicled, for he was a beauty; but let his history be recorded here—a story without a plot, or a purpose, or a moral. Except, perhaps, the trite one, that truth is best. How much or how little of it has reached my friend I know not, but when he reads this in print, perhaps he will feel that his kindly gift was not altogether thrown away.

GENIUS

ITS ABERRATIONS AND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

THERE has been of late, thanks to the want of reticence of some people, and the omnivorous curiosity of others, a perfect avalanche of talk, earnest argument and frivolous gossip, newspaper articles and dinner-table fights, on the subject of genius —its rights and its immunities, its errors and their excuses, its aberrations and their results. Of course, every person has a different opinion; therefore it can do no harm to advance one more, rather contrary to the opinions generally promulgated.

We may premise, and, I suppose, take for granted, that there is such a thing as

genius; that inherent and inexplicable quality, which here and there distinguishes one human being from the common herd. Talent is the successful use of certain capacities, possessed in more or less degree by us all; but genius is original, unique; and in whatever form it may develop itself is the greatest gift that can be given to man, the strongest known link between the material life we have and the spiritual life that we can only guess at. Every great poet, painter, or musician—every inventor or man of science, every fine actor or orator, comes to us as the exponent of something diviner than we know. We cannot understand it, but we feel it, and acknowledge it.

And, in our ignorance, we are prone to consider it as a thing apart; and its possessor as a creature apart, not to be judged by the same laws, or treated in the same manner, as other human beings. A city

set on a hill cannot be hid. Once let a man be recognised as a man of genius, and the world is apt to regard him as something exceptional — either a divinity or a fool. His virtues, his vices, are attributed, not to the human nature which he shares in common with us all, but to that something which he possesses beyond us all—his genius.

Let us instance a late lamentable case, over which society has fought and howled, like dogs over garbage. Two people, man and wife, of whom one was supposed to be, and both really were, wonderfully gifted, succeed in making one another thoroughly miserable. Why? Because the woman married, out of wounded feminine pride or (she owned) for 'ambition,' a self-absorbed, egotistical, ill-tempered man, who had ruined his constitution by his persistent breaking of every law of health. Disappointed, neglected, she does her wifely duty

in a literal sense, but she seasons it with incessant complaints and the cruel use of that weapon which is a gentlewoman's instinctive defence against a boor—sarcasm. He too lives a life unimpeachable externally, but within full of rancour, malice, and a selfishness which approaches absolute cruelty; his peasant nature perpetually blinding him to the sufferings of his wife, more gently born and gently bred; while her morbid sensitiveness exaggerates trivial vexations into great misfortunes, and mere follies into actual crimes. All this wretchedness sprung, not from the man's genius, but from his bad qualities, which, had he been a brainless ass, would have made his wife's life and his own just as miserable. Yet society moans out the moral, 'Never marry a genius!' or the worse one, 'If you do marry a genius you must condone all his shortcomings, lay yourself down as a mat

for him to rub his shoes on, give him everything and expect from him nothing, not even the commonest rules of domestic courtesy and social morality.'

Another example — perhaps worse, for the hero of it broke through more than the limits of mere social morality. Take away the glamour which enthusiastic adorers have thrown over the great idol of Weimar, and what is he? A modern imitation of the pre-Christian Greek, who knew no worship but that of beauty, and beauty in its lowest form, unallied with good—a Sybarite, whose god was himself, and who did not hesitate to sacrifice to his supposed artistic culture manly honour and womanly happiness, for all his love-affairs served him as mere 'experiences.'

Yet there are those who declare that this breaker of women's hearts, this artistic experimentalist, confusing hopelessly right and

wrong, was but exercising the prerogative of all men of genius, who 'learn in suffering'—generally the suffering of others—'what they teach in song.' But had he never sung at all, what a culpable life, execrated by all good men and pure women, would have been that of Wolfgang von Göethe!

More instances. May not many a young Scottish exciseman, not being also a poet, have sunk lower and lower, through temptations which he was too weak to resist, to find the drunkard's early and dishonoured grave, unextenuated by all the picturesque apologies that have been made for Robert Burns? Was Richard Brinsley Sheridan the only improvident Irishman, charming, but utterly unreliable, to whom debt is a mere joke, and a lie only a poetical imagination? Yet in both cases the blame is laid, not upon the men themselves and their innate errors,

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but upon the only redeeming quality they possessed—their genius. For which also, by a curious contradiction, the world excuses them everything, declaring that—

'The light which led astray
Was light from heaven;'

as if any light which led astray *could* come from heaven!

No! A man's temptations spring, not from his genius—the divine thing in him—but from 'the world, the flesh, and the devil,' with which he, and we all, are for ever battling our whole lives long. If he succumbs, it is himself he has to blame—his poor miserable mortal nature, and not that immortal part of him, which came, he knows not how, and goes, whither he cannot tell. In truth, no one can tell anything at all about it, except that it is a possession apart, giving keener sorrows and more ecstatic joys —making men of genius in a sense more

responsible than other men, but not exempting them from the common duties and the common lot of humanity.

It is no excuse for the selfish lover and faithless husband of 'Bonny Jean' that he wrote some of the sweetest love-songs in existence. It is little glory to the worshipped moral teacher of the last half-century that, after being his wife's torment for the most of that time (except for a few beautiful letters —it is so easy to write letters!) he lamented her with a pathetic remorse, the reality of which no one can doubt, except that it came too late to convert words into deeds.

How sad a thing it is when a man of genius has to entrench himself behind his works, as being so much better than his personality! With a woman of genius it is even worse. Can any writings of the two greatest female novelists of the age—French and English—and one, the Englishwoman,

full of most noble qualities—atone for the lack in both of that crown of stainless matronhood which should have adorned either brow, making the life a consecration of the books, instead of the books being a piteous apology for the life?

The question stands thus: Does genius absolve either man or woman from ordinary moral and social laws, and everyday duties? Is it grand and noble, or weak and cowardly, that any one should hide behind the shelter of his brains, saying, 'This is me. You must not expect me to be like you common mortals, to eat, drink, and sleep as you do, to pay my debts and control my passions, to be a decent son, husband, father, and citizen. I have only myself—that is, my genius—to think of. Everything must be subservient to this. If I break all sanitary laws, and my health gives way, it is not I who am accountable, it is my genius, the sword wearing away

the scabbard. If I am irregular, lazy, unbusinesslike, and consequently always behindhand with the world, it is the world's neglect, not my own improvidence, which has made me poor. If I run counter to all the decorums of society, all the doctrines of moral right, it is not my fault;—I was not made like other people, and I am not to be judged by the same laws as they are.'

This, put into plain English, is the creed of half the world concerning genius, and of genius concerning itself. It is time that a word should be said on the other side.

Granted that a man does possess great capacity, if—(like one over whose newly-closed grave condemnation melts into pity) —he persists in sleeping all day and sitting up all night, in stupefying himself with tobacco, and maddening himself with chloral, in leading a life wherein all moral obligations, all requirements of common sense, are

deliberately set aside—what can he expect? Only to end his career like that poor soul departed, who, but for his genius, would be utterly condemned. But was it his genius that destroyed him? Was it not his sensuous or rather his sensual nature? his want of resistance to all that honest, honourable men resist? his egotistical indifference to all the laws of right and wrong that most other men obey? Therefore there came upon him the inevitable end—the same retribution that would have come to Tom Smith or Richard Jones, without any genius at all. Had they lived the life he did, they would have died as he did, and society would have said, 'Serve them right!' Why should society be less severe unto those to whom so much more is given, and from whom in common justice so much more should be required?

In speaking of the aberrations of genius, I only use a mere phrase. I believe the

highest form of genius would have, and has, no aberrations at all. It is a light so divine that no refraction of its rays is possible. So far from holding itself superior to the common laws and duties of human nature, it will, I believe, obey and fulfil them all, more rigorously and perfectly than any inferior organisation. The greatest man is also the best man. He not only sees the right much clearer than his neighbours, but *he does it.* If, seeing it, he fails to do it, he merits condemnation as sharply as his neighbours. Nay, more so; in that he had eyes and would not see; ears, and would not hear.

'Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life,' is as true of genius as of religion. Its temptations and sorrows — like its rewards and joys—are keener than those of ordinary humanity, and the sympathy given to it should be in larger proportion. But only

sympathy, never extenuation. We degrade and humiliate genius when we make for it those allowances which we refuse to make for our fellow-creatures in general.

The line between a good man and a bad should be drawn just as clearly, whether or not he be a man of brains. He must earn his honest bread, fulfil his social and domestic duties, and carry on his life with due regard to common sense and prudence, or retribution will assuredly follow him. Ay, and he will deserve it, as surely as the labourer who drinks instead of working; the tradesman who neglects his shop; the professional man who lives up to the last halfpenny of his income, and having brought up his family in idle luxury, dies, and leaves them to starvation or to the charity of the public.

The 'moods' of genius, so far from being its honour, are its disgrace, its weakness, its reproach. So are its neglects of

the duties and beauties of ordinary life. Happily, the day is gone by when one's ideal portrait of a poet was with bare throat, Byronic tie, and eye 'in a fine frenzy rolling;' or of a literary lady with uncombed hair, torn or ragged gown, and slippers down at heel, courting the Muses with upraised pen in a rather dirty hand. Experience has proved that a man of the highest genius may be also a good man of business, accurate, methodical, conscientious; as well as an excellent husband and father, citizen and friend. Even with women—as the world has found out—it is possible, both to write a book and make a pudding; to study deeply art or science, and yet understand that not inferior art and science, how to keep house with economy, skill, and grace. Incredible as it might appear to the last generation, some of our best modern authoresses have been also the best of wives and mothers;

or, failing this natural and highest vocation, have led a most useful single life, deficient in none of the characteristics of genius, except its eccentricities and follies.

That a man of genius ought never to marry is a very common creed, and a true one, if his intellect is held to exempt him from all the duties of humanity: that if he be a poet, that great stronghold of virtuous youth—the 'maiden passion for a maid'—may allowably be frittered away into half a hundred passions for half a hundred maids; that if he marries, and heaven gives him children—the blessed arrows in the quiver of all other men—they should be to him only arrows that wound his own flesh, perpetual worries, burdens, and plagues, who hinder the development of his genius. So do his butcher and baker, who are so unreasonable as to expect to be paid; so does his wife, if she dares to insist that he shall

not victimise the household — keep dinner waiting indefinitely while he finishes a sonnet; or, for want of the commonest self-control — which we ordinary folk have to exercise every day of our lives—appear in the bosom of his family moody, irritable, intolerable; until the hapless mistress of the house requires to hint to perplexed guests, as a great man's spouse is said always to whisper: 'Don't contradict him—*we* never do.'

Such a man may be a genius, but he is also an ill-tempered, conceited egotist, who deserves to be shown no mercy. For these aberrations of his generally arise, not from his genius at all, but from something much more commonplace. It is curious how much a man's brains are affected by his stomach. Even as many a sentimental young woman has died, not of a broken heart, but a squeezed liver, so many a promising young

man, author, artist, or musician, has 'perished in his pride,' not of over-work, which alone rarely kills anybody, but of over-smoking, over-dancing, or over-dining.

Yet while refusing to acknowledge black as white, to condone weakness, and pander to error—let us speak the truth in love, and never deny for one moment that genius, with all its shortcomings, is the one heavenly leaven of human life, without which the whole lump would grow corrupt, worthless, and abominable. It deserves from us the utmost sympathy, the warmest tenderness, the largest allowance compatible with justice. It is entitled to all reverence—nay, worship; but this should be a clear-eyed, rational worship. That one man may do things which it were culpable and contemptible for other men to do; that one woman may set herself against the laws of God and man, and yet be admired and loved while

other women are condemned, is a creed which all just and righteous people hold to be utterly false and untenable. The divine right of genius is as true as the divine right of kings. But how do we know that it is a divine right unless he who claims it proves it by his life?

And, thank God, in all times a noble multitude have proved and are proving it. It is invidious to name names—those hitherto named or indicated have been exclusively among the number passed *ad majores*; leaving to the world open records by which they may and must be judged. But when this living generation has become the dead, I think posterity will find many instances to establish the law that greatness and goodness are, and ought to be, identical. That is, no fool was ever a truly good man; and no bad man, be his genius ever so wonderful, was ever a really great man. If we

separate what a man does from what he is, we grievously and dangerously err.

Finally, I would say to all who consider themselves 'born to greatness,' or who by unwise friends 'have greatness thrust upon them'—Be a man first, a genius afterwards. Make your life as complete as you can; fulfil all its duties; deny yourself none of its lawful joys. Your brains—be thankful if you have got them, and make much of them!—were meant, not as a shield to crouch behind, but as a weapon to fight with, against the temptations and difficulties common to all. And you possess something which is not common to all—a Holy Grail, which can only be carried by those of pure heart and stainless life.

Genius is the utmost defence which man or woman can have, not only against sin, but also against sorrow; since it is, for all mortal ills, strength and consolation. And according

as its possessor is greater than his fellows, so much the more should he take care that he loses no inch of moral stature—that the light which he bears is kept burning clear and bright; that he neither apologises for himself, nor asks others to apologise for him, more than for other men. He is at once too humble and too proud.

A man of genius is born to be both prophet, priest, and king; but if he casts his crown to the ground, if he prefers the Circesty to the temple, if he allies himself to those who prophesy one thing and act another, he deserves no pity, and should be shown none; at least, none greater than we would show to any other miserable sinner who had not only wandered from the right road himself, but helped to lead others astray.

It is this which forces us into sternness, and compels the plain-spoken justice which seems so cruel. We cannot exaggerate the

danger it is to the young to teach them that genius is an excuse for error, that an author's books are the condonation of his life; that what is moral turpitude in a small man, is in a great man only a venial error, nay, perhaps (I have heard it thus argued), that if he had been a better man he would not have been so great a genius! To such confounders of right and wrong, what can one answer? except to suggest that the well-known Miltonic Personage who decided, 'Evil, be thou my good!' would probably be to them the most satisfactory type of transcendent genius.

But we, who humbly try to walk in the light as followers of Him 'with whom is no darkness at all,'—we, believing that genius comes direct from Him, and is the exponent of Him, exact from it not a lower but a higher standard than that of ordinary men. We feel that we are exalting, not lowering it,

when we urge upon all who possess it to live up to this standard, rather than accept the pity which humiliates and the excuses which degrade. Since for a man or woman of genius more than for any of us is written that saying, mysterious, apparently impossible, and yet to be believed in until death shall make it divinely possible: 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

MY SISTER'S GRAPES

A STORY FOR OLD AND YOUNG

PERHAPS you might not think Uncle Dick a gentleman. Aunt Emma did not, I know, though she kept her mind to herself, being his brother's widow, and the prudent mother of many children, who were Uncle Dick's nearest of kin. He lived with them, that is, if he could be said to live anywhere, being always on the move, never liking to stay long in one place, and somewhat restless-minded, as those are who have passed all their life in rambling about the world. A 'rolling stone' he certainly was, though he could scarcely be said to have gathered no moss, as he had amassed two

fortunes, one after the other; had lost the first, and was now enjoying the second, in his own harmless, but rather eccentric way.

I doubt if Aunt Emma really liked him; but she was always very civil to him; her chief complaint being, that he never would 'take his position in the world.' That is, he avoided her balls, made himself scarce at her dinner-parties, and no persuasion could ever induce him to exhibit his long, thin, gaunt figure, his brown hands and face, in evening clothes. What a 'guy' he would have looked! as we boys always agreed; and sympathised with Uncle Dick rather than with Aunt Emma. But in his own costume we admired him immensely. His shooting-jacket, knickerbockers, and Panama hat, were to us the perfection of comfort and elegance.

As to his cleverness, that also was a disputed point—with some folk. But we had never any doubt at all. And perhaps we

were right. 'A fool and his money are soon parted,' says the proverb. Nevertheless, when they part to meet again, that is, when a man can bear the loss of one fortune, and set to work and make another, the chances are (without any exaggerated mammon-worship I express it) that he is *not* a fool.

'Yes, I have really made two fortunes,' said Uncle Dick, as we sat by him, beguiling a dull day, when the fish refused to bite, with innumerable questions, till at last he 'rose' —like a trout at a fly. 'How old was I when I lost the first one? Well, about twenty-five—just twenty-five—for I remember it happened on my birthday, Michaelmas Day.'

'Happened all in one day?' some of us inquired.

'Ay, in a day, an hour, a minute,' said Uncle Dick, with his peculiar smile, half-sad, half droll, as if he saw at once all the fun and

all the pathos of life. 'But it was not in the day either, it was in the middle of the night. I went to sleep a rich man; by daylight I was a beggar. Any more questions, boys?'

Of course we rained them upon him by the dozen. He sat composedly watching his float swim down the stream, and answered none of us; Uncle Dick had, when he chose, an unlimited capacity for silence.

'Yes,' he said at length. 'It was one night, in the middle of the Atlantic, on the deck of a sinking ship. There's a saying, boys, about gaining the whole world, and losing one's own soul. Well, I gained my soul, though I lost my fortune. And it was then that *that* happened about my sister's grapes.'

Now Uncle Dick was in the habit of talking nonsense, at least Aunt Emma considered it such. In his long solitude he was accustomed to let his thoughts run underground,

as it were, for a good while, when they would suddenly crop up again, and he would make a remark, *à propos* of nothing, which greatly puzzled matter-of-fact people, or those who liked elegant small-talk, of which he had absolutely none.

'Your sister's grapes?' repeated one of us, with great astonishment. 'Then you had a sister? Where is she now?'

Uncle Dick looked up at the blue sky—intensely blue it was that day, as deep and measureless as infinity. 'Where is she? I —don't—know. I wish I did! But HE knows; and I shall find out some time.' Then he added briefly, 'My sister Lily died of consumption when she was fifteen, and I about ten years old.'

'And what about her grapes? Is it a story—a true story?'

'Quite true—to me, though all might not believe it. Some might even laugh at it,

and I don't like to be laughed at. No—I don't mind—laughing can't harm me. I'll tell you, boys, if you fancy to hear. It may be a good lesson for some of you.'

We didn't much care for 'lessons,' but we liked a story, so we begged Uncle Dick to tell us this one 'from the very beginning.'

'No, not from the beginning, which could benefit neither you nor me,' said Uncle Dick gravely. 'I'll take up my tale from the point I mentioned, when I found myself at midnight on the deck of the *Colorado*, Australian steamer, bound for London, fast going down. And she went down.'

'You with her?'

'Not exactly, or how should I be here, sitting quietly fishing—which seems odd, when I think of the hurly-burly of that night. It had come quite suddenly, after a long spell of fair weather, which we found so dull that we began drinking, smoking, gambling, and

even fighting now and then; for we were a rough lot, mostly "diggers." These, like myself, had worked a "claim," or half a claim, at Ballarat; worked it so well that they soon found they had made a fortune, so determined to go to England and spend it.

'I thought I would do the same. I was quite young, yet I had amassed as much money as many a poor fellow, a clergyman, or a soldier, or an author, can scrape together in a lifetime. And I wanted to spend it in seeing life. Hitherto I had seen nothing at all—in civilisation, that is—having never had the least bit of fun till I ran away from home, seven years ago, and very little fun after; it was all hard work. Now, having been so lucky as to amass a fortune, I meant to enjoy myself.

'I had never enjoyed home very much. My people, good as they were, were rather dull people—or at least I thought them so.

They always bothered me about "duty," till I hated the very sound of the word. They called my fun mischief, my mischief they considered a crime. So I slipped away from them, and after a letter or two I gradually let them go, or fancied they were letting me go, and forgot almost their very existence. I might have been a waif, or a stray drifted ashore, or dropped from the clouds, so little did I feel as if I had any one belonging to me. My people all melted out of my mind; sometimes for weeks I never once thought of them, never remembered that I had a father, or mother, or brothers—Lily had been my only sister, and she died.'

Uncle Dick stopped a moment, then continued.

'I don't wish, boys, to put myself forward as worse than I was, or better. People find their level pretty well in this world. It's no good either to puff yourself up as a saint, or

go about crying yourself down as a miserable sinner. In either case you think a great deal too much about yourself, which is as harmful a thing as can happen to any human being.

'Certainly I was no worse than my neighbours, and no better. I liked everybody, and most people liked me; I troubled nobody, and nobody troubled me. I meant to go on that principle when I got back into civilisation—to spend my money and have my fling. Possibly I might run down to see "the old folks at home," whom we diggers were rather fond of singing about, but we seldom thought about them—at least, I did not. But they formed no part of my motives for coming to England. I came simply and solely to amuse myself.

'I had just turned in with the rest, not drunk, as a good many of us were that night, but "merry." An hour after we turned out,

and stood facing one another, and facing death. A sudden hurricane had risen, some of our masts had gone overboard; we had sprung a leak, and work as we might, the captain said he believed we should go to pieces before morning. He had been drunk too, which perhaps accounted for our disaster in a good sound ship, and the safe open sea; but he was sober enough now. He did his best, and when hope was over, said he should "go to the bottom with his ship." And he went. I took his watch to his widow; he gave it me just before he jumped overboard, poor fellow!

'Well, boys, and what was I going to tell you?' said Uncle Dick, drawing his long brown hand across his forehead. 'Oh, about the ship *Colorado* going down, and all the poor wretches fighting for their lives, in the boats or out of them, which was about an equal chance. We could just see one another

by the starlight, or the white gleam of the waves; groups of struggling men—happily there was not a woman on board—some paralysed and silent, others shrieking with terror; some sobbing and praying, others only waiting. For heaven, to which we all were straight going, seemed to be the last thing we ever thought of. We only thought of life—dear life!—our own lives, nobody else's.

'People say that a shipwreck brings out human nature as nothing else does—ghastly human nature in all its brutality; every man for himself, and God—no, not God, but the devil, for us all. I found it so. It was horrible to see those men, old, young, and middle-aged; some clothed, some half-naked, but all clinging to their bags full of nuggets, which they had tied round their waists, or held in their hands, eager to save their gold, until it gradually dawned

upon some of the feebler among them that they would hardly save themselves. Then they no longer tried to conceal their money, but offered a quarter, a half, two-thirds of it, to anybody who would help them. Nobody did. Everybody had but one person to think of—himself.

'For me, I was a young fellow—young and strong. I had never faced death before, and it felt—well, strange! I was not exactly frightened, but I was awed. . . . I turned from the selfish, brutal, cowardly wretches around me; they had shown themselves in their true colours, and I was disgusted at myself for having put up with them so long. I didn't like even to go to the bottom with such a miserable lot. In truth, it felt hard enough to go to the bottom at all.

'The biggest of my nuggets I always carried in a belt round my waist, but the

rest of my 'fortune' was in my bag. Most of us had these bags, and tried to get with them into the boats, which was impossible. So some had to let them go overboard, but others, shrieking and praying, refused to be parted from their 'luggage,' as they called it. They were not parted, for both soon went to the bottom together. I was not inclined for that exactly, and so, after a few minutes' thought, I left my bag behind.'

'How much was there in it?' some one asked.

'I don't know exactly, but I guess'—he still used a Yankee phrase here and there—'somewhere about seven or eight thousand pounds.'

We boys drew a long breath. 'What a lot of money! And it all went to the bottom of the sea?'

'Yes. But, as the Bible says, what will

not a man give "in exchange for his soul"? Or his life—for my soul troubled me mighty little just then; I hardly knew I had one till I lost my money. So, you see, it was a good riddance, perhaps.'

We stared—Uncle Dick talked so very oddly sometimes. And then we begged him to continue his story.

'Well,' I was standing quiet, waiting my turn to jump into the boat—the last boat—for two had been filled and swamped. Being young, it seemed but right to let the older fellows go first, and, besides, I wanted to stick by the captain as long as I could. He, I told you, determined to stick by his ship, and went down with her. He had just given me his watch and his last message to his wife, and I was trying, as I said, to keep quiet, with all my wits about me. But I seemed to be half-dreaming, or as if I saw myself like another

person and felt rather sorry for myself, to be drowned on my twenty-fifth birthday—drowned just when I had made my fortune, and was going home to spend it.

'Home! The word, even, had not crossed my lips or my mind for years. As I said it, or thought it—I can't remember which, all of a sudden I seemed to hear my mother's voice, clear and distinct through all the noise of the storm. Boys, what do *you* think she said? "*Richard, how could you take your sister's grapes?*"

'It flashed upon me like lightning—something that happened when I was only ten years old, and yet I remembered it like yesterday. I saw myself, young wretch! with the bunch of grapes in my hand, and my mother with her grave sad eyes, as, passing through the dressing-room into my sister's bedroom, she caught me in the act of stealing them. I could almost hear

through the open door poor Lily's short feeble cough—she died two days after. The grapes had been sent her by some friend—she had so many friends. I knew where they were kept; I had climbed up to the shelf, and eaten them all.

'Many a selfish thing had I done, both before I left home and afterwards; why should this little thing, long forgotten, come back now? Perhaps, because I was never punished for it; my mother, who at another time might have boxed my ears or taken me to father to be whipped, did nothing, said nothing, except those few words of sad reproach, "*How could you take your sister's grapes?*"

'I heard them through the horrible tumult of winds, and waves, and poor souls struggling for life. *My* life, what had I made of it? If I went to the bottom of the sea, I and all my money, who would

miss me? who would care? Hardly even my mother. If she ever heard of my death —this terrible death to-night—she might drop a tear or two, but nothing like the tears she shed over my sister, who, in her short life, had been everybody's comfort and joy. While I——

'"Mother," I cried out loud, as if she could hear me there, many thousand miles off, "Mother, forgive me, and I'll never do it any more."

'I had not said this when I was ten years old and took the grapes, but I said it —sobbed it—at twenty-five, when the "it" implied many a selfishness, many a sin, that my mother never knew. Yet the mere words seemed to relieve me, and when, directly afterwards, some one called out from the boat, "Jump in, Dick; now's your turn!" I jumped in to take my chance of life with the rest.

'It was given me. I was among the eighteen that held on till we were picked up, almost skin and bone, and one of us raving mad from thirst, by a homeward-bound ship, and landed safely in England. No, boys, don't question me, I won't tell you about that week; *I can't.*'

It was not often Uncle Dick said 'I can't'; indeed, it was one of his queer sayings that *can't* was a word no honest or brave lad ought to have in his dictionary. We turned away our eyes from him—he seemed not to like being looked at—and were silent.

'Well, I landed, and found myself walking London streets, not the rich, healthy, jolly young fellow who had come to have his fling there, but a poor shattered wretch, almost in rags, and just "a bag of bones." All that remained of my fortune were the few nuggets which I had sewed into my belt. I

turned them, not without some difficulty, into food and clothing of the commonest kind, to make my money last as long as I could. I did not want to come home quite a beggar; if I had been, I should certainly never have come home at all.

'By mere chance, for I had altogether forgotten times and seasons, the day I came home was a Christmas morning. The bells were ringing, and all the good folk going to church,—my mother too, of course. We met at the garden gate. She didn't know me, not the least in the world, but just bowed, thinking it was a stranger coming to call, till I said "Mother," and then——

'Well, boys, that's neither here nor there. It's a commonplace saying, but one can't hear it too often, or remember it too well—that, whatever else we have, we never can have but one mother. If she's a good one, make the most of her; if a middling one,

put up with her; if a bad one, let her alone, and hold your tongue. You know whether I have any need to hold my tongue about your grandmother.

'But I can't talk about her, or about that Christmas Day. We did *not* go to church, and I doubt if we ate much Christmas dinner; but we talked, and talked, straight on, up to ten o'clock at night, when she put me to bed, and tucked me in, just as if I had been a little baby. Oh, how pleasant it was to sleep in sheets again—clean, fresh sheets—and have one's mother—one's very own mother—settling the pillow and taking away the candle!

'My room happened to be that same dressing-room behind the nursery where Lily died. I could see the shelf where the grapes had stood, and the chair I climbed to reach them; with a sort of childish awe, I recalled everything.

'"Mother," I said, catching her by the gown as she said good-night and kissed me, "tell me one thing. What were you doing on my last birthday? That is, if you remembered it at all."

'She smiled. "As if mothers ever forget their boys' birthdays!" and then a very grave look came into her face.

'"My dear, I was clearing out this room, turning it into a bedroom for any stray visitor, little thinking the first would be you. But I did think of you, for I called to mind a naughty thing you once did here, in this very room."

'"And you said, over again, *how could I take my sister's grapes?* I *heard* it, mother, heard it in the middle of the Atlantic." And then I told her my story.

'Now, boys, I ask nobody to believe it, but I believe it myself, and my mother believed it to the day of her death. It made

her happy to think that in some mysterious way she had helped to save me, as mothers never know how, when, and where, some word of theirs may save their wandering sons.

'For I was a wanderer still. I stayed with her only a month, while my nuggets lasted, and then I worked my passage back to Australia, and began again in the same way, and yet a new way. New in one thing at least, that every Sunday of my life I wrote to my mother. And when at length I came home, too late for her! it was not quite too late for the rest of you. Bad is the best, maybe, but I've tried to do my best for you all.'

'Oh, Uncle Dick!' For he had been as good as a father to some of us, sent us to school and to college, and, what we liked a great deal better, taken us fishing and shooting, and given us no end of fun.

'So, boys,' said he, smiling at our demonstrations of affection—and yet he liked to be loved, we were sure of that—'you have a sneaking kindness for me after all? And you don't think me altogether a villain, even though I did once take my sister's grapes?'

Note.—It may interest readers to know that this story is really 'founded on fact'; one of those inexplicable facts that we sometimes meet with, and which are stranger than anything we authors invent in our fictions.

ON SISTERHOODS

'I slept, and dreamed that life was Beauty;
I woke, and found that life was Duty.'

THIS couplet was the favourite axiom of a dear old friend of mine, and the keynote of her noble and sorely-tried life of over eighty years. As I sit writing, watching the same hills and the same beautiful river that she watched until she died, it seems a fitting motto for a few words I have long wished to say, and which a chance incident has lately revived in my mind.

A young lady, who had been for some time a probationer (or whatever the term may be) in one of those Anglican Sisterhoods which their friends so much admire, their foes so

sharply condemn, wrote to me that she was about to make her 'profession' there, and wished me to be present at the 'service.' These two words were my only clue as to what kind of ceremony it would be, and what sort of 'profession' the girl was about to make. A 'girl' she still was to me, for I had held her in my arms when only a day old; but in truth she was a woman of thirty, quite capable of judging, deciding, and acting for herself. She had had a hard life, was claimed by no very near ties or duties, and I felt a satisfaction in thinking she had the courage to choose a decided vocation; which would be to her at once a refuge and an occupation, for the Sisterhood bore the name of the Orphanage of Mercy. Whatever her life there might be, it could not be an idle life. I had a certain sympathy with it, which prompted me at once to say I would go; and I went.

It was one of those gray, wet, summer days which always strike one with a melancholy unnaturalness, like a human existence lost or wasted. As I stood in the soaking rain before a large monastic building, the door of which was opened by a nunlike portress, I was conscious of a slight sensation of pain at the difference between this home and a bright, happy English home. But not all homes are bright and happy, and not all—nay, very few—wives and mothers have the placid, contented smile of the Sister who came to welcome me in the parlour—a regular convent-parlour or 'parloir,' which is what the word originally came from.

She explained that Sister —— (*my* girl) was 'in retreat,' and could see no one till after the service; and then we stood talking for several minutes about her and about the Orphanage. The Sister's dress, manner, and indeed the whole atmosphere of the place,

were so essentially monastical, that I involuntarily put the question, 'Are you a Catholic?'

'Not Roman Catholic,' she answered, after a slight hesitation. 'We belong to the Catholic Church—the Church of England.'

Verily—and I will add happily—our mother Church of England shelters under her broad wings so many diverse broods!—would that they could keep from pecking one another!

When I found myself in the Chapel, it seemed at first exactly like one of those chapels that we see in Norman cathedrals. The high altar was brilliantly lighted, and adorned with white lilies, the faint sweet smell of which penetrated everywhere and mingled with that of incense. But there were none of those paltry or puerile images that abound in Roman Catholic churches; nothing except the large crucifix, the sign of all Christians, to which no good Christian ought to object. Protestant—in the sense of Luther

and Calvin, and of modern Low Church and Presbyterianism,—the place certainly was not; but no unbiassed eyewitness could have seen any tokens of Mariolatry or saint-worship in it, or in the service held there.

Gradually the whole Chapel became filled with Sisters, who I saw were divided into three classes—the black-veiled, the white-veiled, and the novices, or probationers. These latter wore the dress of ordinary young ladies, while the Sisters were undeniably nuns; in their plain black gowns and white or black veils of some soft-falling, close-fitting material—a costume as becoming and comfortable as any woman can wear. It seemed to suit all the faces, young and old, and some were quite elderly and not over beautiful; but every one had that peculiar expression of mingled sweetness and peace, which—let the contemptuous world say what it will—I have found oftener on the faces of nuns—Catholic

Petites Sœurs des Pauvres or Protestant Sisters of Charity—than among any other body of women that I know; a fact which I neither attempt to account for nor argue from, but merely state it as such.

After a somewhat long pause of waiting, and reading of the printed service which was given us, there was a slight stir and turning of heads. A distant chanting of female voices (some, I own, a trifle out of tune) announced the procession—very like the processions with which we are familiar in foreign churches, save that there were only two priests and no acolytes. The rest were Sisters; except two young ladies dressed in full bridal costume, who, with a motherly nun behind them, came and knelt before the altar. Neither looked excited nor agitated; and when the service began, there followed a series of solemn questions, asked and answered, just like a marriage ceremony,

in which I recognised the voice of *my* girl, perfectly natural, collected, and firm.

The chaplain, or priest—his vestments were very like a Roman Catholic priest's, but every word he uttered might have come from an evangelical pulpit—calling each by her Christian name—I, as her godmother, had given my girl hers, and would have been loth she should change it—asked 'if she were joining this community of her own free will, if she would endow it with her worldly goods, and take the vow of obedience to its rules?' I heard no other vow except that something was said about chastity as 'the spouse of Christ.' To all these was answered distinctly, 'I will, God being my helper.' Afterwards the dress of each—gown, veil, and cross—was brought to the altar and blessed in a few simple words, and the two girls went out, during the singing of a hymn, to reappear presently in another

procession; with their secular dress for ever laid aside. There was no cutting off of hair, or prostration under a black pall—as in Catholic countries; merely the change of dress.

But that was very great. In the young nun who walked up to the altar, taper in hand, I hardly recognised my girl, so spiritualised was her honest face by the picturesqueness of the close white veil, and by her expression of entire content — as sweet as that I have seen on some young brides' features as they went down the aisle to the church-door.

'Are you content?' I said, as, when service was ended, she came to me, in a large room, where Sisters, clergy, and friends were standing about, taking tea or coffee, and chatting in a most mundane and secular fashion. 'Are you really satisfied?'

'Perfectly,' she answered; and kissed me and her other friends and kindred, not with-

out emotion, but with no excitement or exaltation; indeed, she was the last person in the world to be what the French call *exaltée*, or to give way to romantic impulses of any kind. "'But you must come to speak to the Mother. I do so want you to see our Mother. It is she who has done it all.'

By which was meant the Orphanage—established almost entirely by this lady, as I afterwards learnt. And when I saw the Mother I was not surprised.

Some people strike you at once with their personality, physical and mental, which carries with it an influence that, you feel, must affect every one within their reach. I have never seen any one in whom this individuality was more strong, except perhaps Cardinal Newman, of whom the Mother vividly reminded me. Tall, stately, and beautiful — the beauty of middle-age just becoming old age—of few words, but with

a clasp of the hand and a smile beyond all speaking, I could understand how the Mother was just the woman to be head of a community like this, ruling it as much by her influence as her authority.

I had some talk with her, and also with the officiating priest — chaplain, 'spiritual director,' the anti-Ritualists would call him; but, if a wolf in sheep's clothing, he looked the most harmless of vulpine foes, as he stood sipping his coffee and chatting to his cheerful flock, who fluttered around as women always will round a clergyman, even in 'the world.' This, though inside a quasi-nunnery, seemed a very merry world, and all the nuns went about conversing much as people do at afternoon teas and garden-parties, except that there was not one who had that jaded, bored, or cross look so often seen on the faces of the rich and prosperous who have nothing to do.

'And now you must come and see our orphans. We have over two hundred. We take them in from anywhere or anybody; no recommendation needed except that they are orphans, and destitute. We feed, clothe, and educate them until they are old enough to work, and then we find them work, chiefly as domestic servants. Come and look at them.'

Orphanages are at best a sad sight: the poor little souls seem such automatons, brought up by line and rule, just No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 — of no importance to anybody. But this class—a sewing-class, I think it was, chiefly of big girls, who rose with bright faces and showed their work with intelligent pride—was something quite different. More different still was the long procession of 'little ones' which we met as it was going out of the Chapel to supper and bed.

'Children, don't you know me?' said the

new-made Sister, stopping the three smallest —such tiny dots!—and calling them by their Christian names. They hesitated a minute, then with a cry of delight sprang right into her arms. She held them there: one over her shoulder, the other two clinging to her gown. Three orphans and a solitary woman, husbandless, childless, laughing and toying together, kissing and kissed,—they made a group so pretty, so happy—so full of God's great mercy, compensation,—that it brought the tears to one's eyes.

I went away after having gone over the whole establishment; went away feeling that there was a great deal to be said—much more than we Protestants till lately had any idea of—on behalf of Sisterhoods.

> 'I slept, and dreamed that life was Beauty;
> I woke, and found that life was Duty.'

Alas! this is the experience of almost every woman who has any womanly qualities in her

at all, long before she reaches old age! How to combine the two—how to arrange her life so that duty shall not draw all the beauty out of it, while mere beauty shall always be held subservient to duty—this is the crucial test, the great secret which must be learned during those years—most painful years they often are!—between the first passing away of youth and the quiet acceptance of inevitable old age. Should age come and find the lesson unlearnt, it is too late.

Marriage is supposed to be the great end of a woman's being, and so it is. Few will deny that the perfect life is the married life—the happy married life—though I have heard people say that 'any husband is better than none.' Perhaps so; in the sense of his being a sort of domestic Attila, a 'scourge of God' to 'whip the offending Adam' out of a woman and turn her into an angel, as the wives of some bad husbands seem to be-

come. But, in truth, any wife whose husband is not altogether vicious has a better chance of being educated into perfection, through that necessary altruism which it is the mystery of marriage to teach, than a woman sunk in luxurious single-blessedness, who has no work to do, and nobody to do it for, and so seems almost compelled into that fatal selfism which is at the root of half the evils and miseries of existence.

Thus we come back to the great question, becoming more difficult as we advance in—shall we call it civilisation? Those women who do not marry, what are they to do with their lives?

For some of them Fate decides, often severely enough, laying on them the sacred burthen of aged parents, or helpless brothers and sisters, or orphan nephews and nieces. Others, left without natural duties or ties, have the strength to make such for them-

selves. I know no position more happy, more useful (and therefore happy) than that of a single woman, who, having inherited or earned sufficient money and position, has courage to assume the status and responsibilities of a married woman. She has, except the husband, all the advantages of the matronly position, and almost none of its drawbacks. So much lies in her power to do unhindered, especially the power of doing good. She can be a friend to the friendless and a mother to the orphan; she can fill her house with happy guests, after the true Christian type—the guests that cannot repay her for her kindness. Being free to dispose of her time and her labour, she can be a good neighbour, a good citizen—whether or not she ever attains the doubtful privilege of female suffrage. Her worldly goods, her time, and her affections are exclusively her own to bestow wisely and well.

Solitary, to a certain extent, her life must always be; but it need never be a morbid, selfish, or dreary life. I think it might be all the better for our girls of this generation, which understands the duties and destinies of women a little better than the last one, if we were to hold up to them—since they cannot all be wives and mothers—this ideal of a happy single life, which lies before any girl who either inherits an independence, or has the courage and ability to earn one.

But such cases are, and must always be, exceptional. The great bulk of unmarried women are a very helpless race, either hampered with duties, or seeking feebly for duties that do not come; miserably overworked, or disgracefully idle; piteously dependent on male relations, or else angrily vituperating the opposite sex for their denied rights or perhaps not undeserved wrongs. Between these two lies a medium class, silent and

suffering, who have just enough money to save them from the necessity of earning it, just enough brains and heart to make them feel the blankness of their life without strength to obviate it—to strike out a career for themselves, and cheat Fate by making it neither a sad nor useless one. It is for these stray sheep, sure to wander if left alone, but safe enough in a flock with a steady shepherd to guide them, that I open up for consideration the question of Sisterhoods.

Not that I defend the mediæval system of nunneries, where, from a combination of motives, good and bad, religious and worldly, girls were separated from all family ties and dedicated to the service of God. It cannot be too strongly insisted that the family life is the first and most blessed life, and that family duties, in whatever shape they come, ought never to be set aside. Also that the

service of God is also best fulfilled through the service of man—the utilising of an aimless existence for the good of others. It is this which constitutes the strength and the charm of a community, for such work can best be done in communities. The mass of women are not clever enough, or brave enough, to carry out anything single-handed. Like sheep, they follow the leader; they will do excellent work if any one will find it for them, but they cannot find it for themselves. How continually do we hear the cry, 'I want something to do;' 'Tell me what to do, and I'll do it!' as she very likely would if shown how.

Of course, a really strong woman would never need this; she would under no circumstances be idle—if she could not find work, she would make it. But for one like this, capable of organising, guiding, ruling, there are hundreds and thousands of women fitted only to

obey; to whom the mere act of obedience is a relief, because it saves them from responsibility. To them a corporate institution, headed by such an one as the Mother of that Orphanage of Mercy I visited, is an actual boon. It protects them from themselves—their weak, vacillating, uncertain selves—puts them under line and rule, gives them the shelter of numbers and the strength of a common interest. It is astonishing what good can be done by a combined body, who, as individuals, would have done no good at all.

An institution which would absorb the waifs and strays of—let us coin a word, and say—gentlewomanhood—ladies of limited income and equally limited capacity, yet very good women so far as they go; which could take possession of them, income and all, saving and utilising both it and themselves —would be a real boon to society. For what does not society suffer from these helpless

excrescences upon it—women with no ties, no duties, no ambition—who drone away a hopeless, selfish existence, generally ending in confirmed invalidism, or hypochondria, or actual insanity!—for diseased self-absorption is the very root of madness. It is a strange thing to say—yet I dare to say it, for I believe it to be true—that entering a Sisterhood, almost any sort of Sisterhood where there was work to do, authority to compel the doing of it, and companionship to sweeten the same, would have saved many a woman from a lunatic asylum.

But it must be the ideal Sisterhood, not that corruption of it as seen in foreign countries which rouses the British ire at the very name of 'nun.' It must be exactly opposite in many things to the Roman Catholic idea of a girl giving up 'the world' and becoming 'the spouse of Christ.' Many a wife and mother belonging to and living in

the world, is just as much the spouse of Christ —if that means devoting herself to good works for the love of Him—as any vowed nun.

Besides, the Sisterhood ought not to be composed at all of girls, but of women old enough to choose their own lot, or submit to Fate's choosing it for them; who either cannot or will not marry; who have no near ties, but need the support and sweetness of adopted affections and extraneous duties. It may be very pleasant to escape from the irksomeness of tending a crabbed parent's declining years, or enduring the ill-humours of an invalid brother or sister, in order to dedicate oneself to general philanthropy, to put on a picturesque dress and devote one's days to good deeds and choral services; but this ought not to be allowed. Family ties should always come first, and any Sisterhood which attempts to break them merits severe reprobation.

In the heroic life of Sister Dora one is painfully conscious of this, both in herself and in the fact, if it be a fact, that she was prohibited from going to the deathbed of her own father, and sent off to nurse some other person, by order of her Superior. I was glad to hear my girl say that immediately after her 'profession' she was to go away for a month to be with a young married sister in her hour of trial. And in answer to another question of mine she said, 'Oh yes, even though you do not agree with us, our Mother will let me come and see you whenever you please.'

This, the liberty of visiting friends, ought —subject to fit regulations—to be an essential element in all Sisterhoods. So also should be the right of returning entirely to 'the world,' if they so choose. Some sort of vow, or promise, must be made—else the community would dwindle into a mere religious

boarding-house. But the vow ought to be, like that of marriage, absolutely binding while it lasts, and intended to last in permanence, yet with the possibility of dissolution did inevitable circumstances require this: a possibility which is practically a certainty, since by our English laws no conventual establishment can detain its inmates for life, or against their own will.

And besides being women of an age to exercise their own discretion, they ought to be allowed full time to do so. Two or three years, at least, my girl had been resident with the Sisterhood before she made her 'profession'—that is, assumed the white veil; and three or four years more, she told me, must pass before she was allowed to take the black one. 'And then?' I said. 'Even then we could break our vows; but,' with a quiet smile, 'I think none of us ever do so,'—Which is common sense also. After seven

years' trial of their vocation, and being already past middle age, most women would feel that their lot was finally settled, and have no mind to change it.

Another absolute law of the ideal Sisterhood must be work. In this nineteenth century we cannot go back to the mediæval notions of ecstatic mysticism or corporeal penitences. I am sure that the respectable Sisters of the Orphanage of Mercy neither flagellate themselves, nor wear hair shirts, nor sleep on cold stones, nor rise at one in the morning to chant litanies. So far as I could see, these ladies live a simple, comfortable, wholesome life; such as will best maintain their own health, that they may use it for the good of others.

And truly this ought to be the primary object of Sisterhoods. They should never be merely religious bodies—and yet I doubt if a purely secular Sisterhood would long

exist. A hospital nurse once said to me, 'To do our work well, we must do it for the love of God.' The same may be said of all work. But it must be done, also, for the love of man; that 'enthusiasm of humanity' which prompts women to devote themselves to charitable labours, such as teaching the young, or nursing the old and sick. Every religious community ought to have distinct and continuous secular work; and a community of women contains so many difficult elements, that nothing but work and plenty of it, guided by a head which is competent to keep the machine perpetually going, will save it from collapse.

Therefore it should combine, if possible, Beauty with Duty. I was glad to see that this particular Sisterhood had made their own dress, and that of their orphans, as picturesque as possible; that their building within and without was not only convenient

but elegant, and their chapel and its service as beautiful as God's house should be. And why not? Lives devoted to duty cannot afford to have any beauty taken out of them. And no one can look round on this lovely outside world without feeling that its Creator meant us to love beauty, to crave after it, and to attain it whenever possible.

The Low Church Bible-woman who goes about in her rusty black, with a bundle of tracts in one hand and a basket in the other, is a most useful and honourable person; but the lady in a nun's dress, or with the white cross of the hospital nurse, carries with her a certain atmosphere of grace which cannot be without its influence even upon the roughest natures. In our ardent pursuit of the Good, we are apt to forget, especially as we grow older, that its power is doubled when it is allied to the Beautiful.

Of course, if every woman were strong enough to live and work alone, to carry out her own individual life and make the best of it, without leaning on any one else, there would be no need for Sisterhoods. But it is not so. Very few women can take care of themselves, to say nothing of other people. Some say this is the fault of Nature, some of education—a centuries-long education into helpless subservience. Whichever theory is right, or perhaps half-right and half-wrong, the result is the same.

For such women, the life in community is eminently desirable. It provides shelter, under the guardianship of a capable head; companionship, for only the strong and self-dependent can endure, permanently, their own company—and perhaps even for them this is not always good; sympathy, something on which to expend their barren and shut-up affections; and lastly, it sup-

plies work, that definite and regular work which is the best solace of sorrow, the best safeguard against temptation, the only efficient help to that ideal condition of a 'sound mind in a sound body' which all women, however feeble their minds and ugly their bodies, should strive for to the very end of life.

These advantages—not small, even though weighed against many disadvantages—were no doubt the reason why, for so many centuries, conventual establishments existed, and still do exist, in Catholic countries. When our Protestant horror of them has a little subsided, we may learn—indeed, in many instances we are already learning—to eliminate the good from the evil, and make use of, without abusing it, Hamlet's not altogether unwise advice to Ophelia, 'Go, get thee to a nunnery—go—go—go!'

And some of us, who set sail so gaily

for the natural port but never found it, and now drift hither and thither, helmless and hopeless, upon the world's desolate sea,—some of us would, perhaps, be not sorry to go, and none the worse for going into some quiet shelter, where they might take up their daily burthen, and grow stronger in the carrying of it, knowing they did not carry it alone. It is the old fable of the bundle of sticks; in which the feeble stick, the crooked stick, the broken stick can bind itself up with the stronger ones, and by association with others be able to cure its own deficiencies and do good service to the end of its days.

For which purpose I say these few words about Sisterhoods.

FACING THE WORLD

A STORY FOR BOYS

'MOTHER, I think I'm almost glad the holidays are done. It's quite different, going back to school again when one goes to be captain, as I'm sure to be. Isn't it jolly?'

Mrs. Boyd's face, as she smiled back at Donald, was not exactly 'jolly.' Still she did smile, and then there came out the strong likeness often seen between mother and son, even when, as in this case, the features are very dissimilar. Mrs. Boyd was a pretty, delicate, little Englishwoman; and Donald took after his father, a big brawny Scotsman, certainly not 'pretty,' and not always sweet.

Poor man! he had of late years had only too much to make him sour.

Though she tried to smile, and succeeded, the tears were in Mrs. Boyd's eyes, and her mouth was quivering. But she set it tightly together, and then she looked more than ever like her son—or rather, her son looked like her.

He was too eager in his delight to notice her much. 'It is so jolly, isn't it, mother? I never thought I'd get to the top of the school at all, for I'm not near so clever as some of the fellows. But now I've got my place, I like it, and I mean to keep it. You'll be pleased at that, mother?'

'I should have been—if—if——' Mrs. Boyd tried to get the words out, and failed, closed her eyes as tight as her mouth for a minute—then opened them, and looked her boy in the face gravely and sadly.

'It goes to my heart to tell you—I've

been waiting to say it all morning,—but, Donald, my dear, you will never go back to school at all.'

'Not go back! when I'm captain, and you and father both said that if I got to be that, I should stop till I was seventeen, and now I'm only fifteen and a half! Oh, mother, you don't mean it! Father would not break his word. I may go back?'

Mrs. Boyd shook her head sadly, and then explained, as briefly and calmly as she could, the heavy blow which had fallen upon the father, and indeed upon the whole family. Mr. Boyd had long been in weak health—about as serious a trouble as could have befallen a man in his profession—an accountant, as they call it in Scotland. Lately, he had made some serious blunders in his figures, and his memory had become so uncertain that his wife persuaded him to consult a first-rate Edinburgh physician—

whose opinion, given only yesterday, after many days of anxious suspense, was that he must give up work altogether, or sink into that most hopeless of illnesses—creeping paralysis—which indeed had already begun.

'Poor father, poor father!' Donald put his hand before his eyes. He was too big a boy to cry, or, at any rate, to be seen crying, but it was with a choking voice that he spoke next. 'I'll take care of you all; I'm old enough.'

'Yes, in many ways you are, my son,' said Mrs. Boyd, who had had a day and a night to face her sorrow, and knew she must do so calmly. 'But you are not old enough to manage the business. Your father will require to take a partner immediately, which will reduce our income one-half. Therefore we cannot possibly afford to send you to school again. The little ones must go; they are not nearly educated yet, but you are.

You will have to face the world, and earn your own living as soon as ever you can, my poor boy!'

'Don't call me poor, mother. I've got you and father and the rest. And as you say, I've had a good education, so far. And I'm fifteen and a half—no, fifteen and three-quarters—almost a man. I'm not afraid.'

'Nor I,' said his mother, who had waited a full minute before Donald could find voice to say all this, and it was stammered out awkwardly and at random. 'No, I'm not afraid because my boy has to earn his bread. I had earned mine for years—as a governess—when father married me. I began work before I was sixteen. My son will have to do the same—that is all.'

That day the mother and son spoke no more together. It was as much as they could do to bear their trouble, without talking about it, and besides Donald was not a boy

to 'make a fuss' over things. He could meet sorrow when it came—that is, the little of it he had ever known, but he disliked speaking of it, and perhaps he was right.

So he just 'made himself scarce' till bedtime, and never said a word to anybody, until his mother came into the boys' room to bid them good-night. There were three of them, but all were asleep except Donald. As his mother bent down to kiss him, he put both arms round her neck, which he did not often do.

'Mother, I'm going to begin to-morrow.'

'Begin what, my son?'

'Facing the world, as you said I must. I can't go to school again, so I mean to try and earn my own living.'

'How?'

'I don't quite know, but I'll try. There are several things I could be—a clerk, or

even a message-boy. I shouldn't like it, but I'd do anything rather than do nothing.'

Mrs. Boyd sat down on the side of the bed. If she felt inclined to cry, she had too much sense to show it; she only took firm hold of her boy's hand, and waited for him to speak on.

'I've been thinking, mother, I was to have a new suit at Christmas; will you give it now? And let it be a coat, not a jacket; I'm tall enough—five feet seven last month, and growing still. I should look almost a man. Then I would go round to every office in Edinburgh, and ask if they wanted a clerk or anything—I wouldn't mind taking *anything*—to begin with. And I can write a decent hand, and I'm not bad at figures. As for my Latin and Greek——'

Here Donald gulped down a sigh, for he was a capital classic, and it had been suggested that he should go to Glasgow Uni-

versity and try for 'the Snell,' which has taken so many clever young Scotsmen to Balliol College, Oxford, and thence on to fame and prosperity. But, alas! no college career was now possible for Donald Boyd. The best he could hope for was to earn a few shillings a week as a common clerk. He knew this, and so did his mother. But they never complained. It was no fault of theirs, or of anybody's. It was just, as they devoutly called it, 'the will of God.'

'Your Latin and Greek may come in some day, my boy,' said Mrs. Boyd cheerfully. 'Good work is never lost.' In the meantime your plan is a very good one, and you shall have your new clothes at once. Then do as you think best.'

'All right; good-night, mother,' said Donald, and in five minutes more was fast asleep.

But though he was much given to sleep-

ing of nights,—indeed, he never remembered lying awake for a single hour in his life,—during daytime there never was a more 'wide-awake' boy than Donald Boyd. He kept his eyes open to everything, and never let the 'golden minute' slip by him. He never idled about—play he didn't consider idling (nor do I!). And I am bound to confess that every day until the new clothes came home was scrupulously spent in cricket, football, and all the other amusements which he was as good at as he was at his lessons. He wanted to 'make the best of his holidays,' he said, knowing well that for him holiday-time, as well as school-time, was now done, and the work of the world had begun in earnest.

The clothes came home on Saturday night, and he went to church in them on Sunday, to his little sisters' great admiration. Still greater was their wonder when, on

Monday morning, he appeared in the same suit, looking 'quite a man,' as they unanimously agreed, and, almost before breakfast was done, started off, not saying a word of where he was going.

He did not come back till the younger ones were all away to bed, so there was no one to question him, which was fortunate, for they might not have got very smooth answers. His mother saw this, and she likewise forebore. She was not surprised that the bright, brave face of the morning looked dull and tired, and that evidently Donald had nothing to tell her.

'I think I'll go to bed,' was all he said. 'Mother, will you give me a "piece" in my pocket to-morrow? One can walk better when one isn't so desperately hungry.'

'Yes, my boy.' She kissed him, saw that he was warmed and fed—he had evidently been on his legs the whole day; then sent

him off to his bed, where she soon heard him delightfully snoring, oblivious of all his cares.

The same thing went on, day after day, for seven days. Sometimes he told his mother what had happened to him, and where he had been, sometimes not. What was the good of telling? it was always the same story. Nobody wanted a boy, or a man, for Donald, trusting to his inches and his coat, had applied for man's work also, but in vain.

Mrs. Boyd was not astonished. She knew how hard it is to get one's foot into ever so small a corner in this busy world, where ten are always struggling for the place of one. Still, she also knew that it never does to give in, that one must leave no stone unturned if one wished to get work at all. Also she still believed in an axiom of her youth, 'nothing is denied to

well-directed labour.' But it must be real hard labour, and it must also be 'well-directed.' So, though her heart ached sorely, as only a mother's can, she never betrayed it, but each morning sent her boy away with a cheerful face, and each evening received him with one, which, if less cheerful, was not less sympathetic. But she never said a word.

At the week's end, in fact, on Sunday morning as they were walking to church, Donald said to her, 'Mother, my new clothes haven't been of the slightest good. I've been all over Edinburgh, to every place I could think of—writers' offices, merchants' offices, wharves, railway-stations, but it's no good. Everybody wants to know where I've been before, and I've been nowhere, except to school. I said I was willing to learn, but nobody will teach me; they say they can't afford it—it is like keeping a dog

and barking yourself — which is only too true,' added Donald, with a heavy sigh.

'Maybe,' said Mrs. Boyd; yet as she looked up at her son—she really did look up at him, he was so tall—she felt that if his honest, intelligent face and manly bearing did not win something at last, what was the world coming to? 'My boy,' she said, 'things are very hard for you, but not harder than for others. I remember once, when I was only a few years older than you, finding myself with only half a crown in my pocket. To be sure, it was a whole half-crown, for I had paid every halfpenny I owed that morning, but I had no idea when the next half-crown would come. However, it did come. I earned two pounds ten the very next day.'

'Did you really, mother?' said Donald, his eyes brightening. 'Then I'll go on, and I'll not "gang awa' back to my mither," as that old gentleman advised me, a queer,

crabbed old fellow he was too, but he was the only one who asked my name and address. The rest of them—well, mother, I've stood a good deal these seven days,' Donald added, gulping down something between a 'fuff' of wrath and a sob.

'I am sure you have, my boy.'

'But I'll hold on; only you'll have to get my boots mended, and meantime, I should like to try a new dodge. My bicycle—it lies in the washing-house—you remember I broke it, and you didn't wish it mended, lest I should break something worse than a wheel. Perhaps! It wasn't worth while risking my life for mere pleasure, but I want my bicycle now for use. If you'll let me have it mended, I can go up and down the country for fifty miles in search of work, to Falkirk, Linlithgow, or even Glasgow—and I'll cost you nothing for travelling expenses. Isn't that a bright idea, mother?'

She had not the heart to say no, or to suggest that a boy on a bicycle applying for work was a thing too novel to be eminently successful. But to get work was at once so essential and so hopeless that she would not throw any cold water on Donald's eagerness and pluck. She hoped, too, that spite of the eccentricity of the notion, some shrewd kind-hearted gentleman might have sense enough to see the honest purpose of the poor lad, who had only himself to depend upon. For his father had now fallen into a state of depression which made all application to him for either advice or help worse than useless. And as both himself and Mrs. Boyd had been orphans, without brother or sister, there were no relatives to come to the rescue. Donald knew, and his mother knew too, that he must shift for himself, to sink or swim.

So after two days' rest, which he much

needed, the boy went off again 'on his own hook,' and his bicycle, which was a degree better than his legs, he said, as it saved shoe-leather. Also he was able to come home pretty regularly at the same hour, which was a great relief to his mother. But he came home nearly as tired as ever, and with a despondent look which deepened every day. Evidently it was just the same story—no work to be had, or if there was work, it was struggled for by a score of fellows, with age, character, experience, to back them; and Donald had none of the three. But he had one quality, the root of all success, and almost certain of success in the end—dogged perseverance.

There is a saying that we British gain our victories, not because we are never beaten, but because we never will see that we are beaten, and so go on fighting till we win. 'Never say die,' was Donald's word to his

mother, night after night. But she knew that those who never *say* die, sometimes do die, quite quietly; and she watched with an anxious heart her boy growing thinner and more worn, even though brown as a berry, with constant exposure all day long to wind and weather, which was now becoming less autumn than winter.

After a fortnight Mrs. Boyd made up her mind that this could not go on any longer, and said so.

'Very well,' Donald answered, accepting her decision, as he had been in the habit of doing all his life. Mrs. Boyd's children knew well that whatever her will was, it was sure to be a just will, and for them, not herself, which was the last person she ever thought of. 'Yes, I'll give in, if you think I ought, for it's only wearing out myself and my clothes to no good. Only let me have one day more, and I'll go as far as ever

I can, perhaps to Dunfermline, or even Glasgow.'

She would not forbid, and once more she started him off, with a cheerful face, in the twilight of the wet October morning, and sat all day long in the empty house,—for the younger ones were now all going to school again,—thinking sorrowfully of her eldest, whose merry schooldays were done for ever.

In the dusk of the afternoon a card was brought up to her, with the message that an old gentleman was waiting below, wishing to see her.

A shudder ran through the poor mother, who, like many another mother, hated bicycles, and never had an easy mind when Donald was away on his. The stranger's first word was anything but reassuring.

'Beg pardon, ma'am, but is your name Boyd, and have you a son called Donald, who went out on a bicycle this morning?'

'Yes, yes, has anything happened? Tell me quick.'

'I'm not aware, ma'am, that anything has happened,' said the old gentleman; 'I saw the lad at eight this morning. He seemed to be managing his machine uncommonly well. I met him at the foot of a brae near the Dean Bridge; he had got off and was walking, so he saw me and took off his cap. I like politeness in a young fellow towards an old one.'

'Did he know you? for I have not that pleasure,' said Mrs. Boyd, polite though puzzled; for the man did not look quite a gentleman, and spoke with the strong accent of an uneducated person; yet he had a kindly expression, and seemed honest and well-meaning, though decidedly 'canny.'

'I canna say he knew me, but he remembered me, which was civil of him. And then I minded the lad as one that had come to

ask me for work a week or two ago, and I took his name and address. That's your son's writing?' he fumbled out and showed a scrap of paper. 'It's *bona fide*, isn't it?'

'Certainly.'

'And he really is in search of work? He hasn't run away from home, or been turned out by his father for misconduct, or anything of that sort? He isn't a scamp or a ne'er-do-weel?'

'I hope he does not look like it!' said Mrs. Boyd proudly.

'No, ma'am, you're right, he doesn't. He carries his character in his face, which, maybe, is better than in his pocket. It was that which made me ask his name and address, though I could do nothing for him.'

'You were the gentleman who told him you couldn't keep a dog and bark yourself,' said Mrs. Boyd, amused and just a shade hopeful.

'Precisely, nor can I. It would have been

cool impudence in a lad to come and ask to be taught his work first and then paid for it, if he hadn't been so very much in earnest that I was rather sorry for him. I'm inclined to believe, from the talk I had with him at the foot of the brae to-day, that he would bark with uncommon little teaching. Material, ma'am, is what we want. I don't care for its being raw, if it's only the right material. I've made up my mind to try your boy.'

'Thank God!'

'What did you say, ma'am? But—I beg your pardon.' For he saw Mrs. Boyd had quite broken down. In truth, the strain had been so long and so great that this sudden relief was quite too much for her.

'I ought to beg your pardon,' she said at last, 'for being so foolish; but we have had hard times of late.' And then in a few simple words she told Donald's whole story.

The old man listened to it in silence.

Sometimes he nodded his head, or bent his chin on his stout stick as he sat, but he made no comments whatever except a brief 'Thank you, ma'am. Now to business,' continued he, taking out his watch, 'for I'm due at dinner, and I always keep my appointments, even with myself. I hope your lad's a punctual lad?'

'Yes, he promised to be back by dark, and I am sure he will be.'

'I can't wait, though. I never wait for anybody, but I keep nobody waiting for me. I'm Bethune and Co., Leith, merchants—practically, old John Bethune, who began life as a message-boy, and has done pretty well considering.'

He had, as Mrs. Boyd was well aware. Bethune and Co. was a name so well known that she could hardly believe in her boy's good luck in getting into the house in any capacity whatever.

'So that's settled,' said Mr. Bethune, rising.

'Let him come to me on Monday morning, and I'll see what he is fit for. He'll have to begin at the very bottom, sweep the office perhaps—I did it myself once. And I'll give him—let me see—ten shillings a week to begin with.'

'To begin with,' repeated Mrs. Boyd, gently but firmly. 'But he will soon be worth more. I know my boy.'

'Very well, when I see what stuff he is made of, he shall have a rise. But I never do things at haphazard, and it's easier going up than coming down. I'm not a benevolent man, Mrs. Boyd, and you needn't think it. But I've fought the world pretty hard myself, and I like to see those that are fighting it. Good evening. Isn't that your son coming round the corner? Well, he's back exact to his time, at any rate. Tell him I hope he'll be as punctual on Monday morning. Good evening, ma'am.'

. . . . .

Now, if this were an imaginary story, I might wind it up by a delightful *denouement* of Mr. Bethune's turning out an old friend of the family, or developing into a new one, and taking such a fancy to Donald that he immediately gave him a clerkship with a large salary, and the promise of a partnership on coming of age; or this worthy gentleman should be an eccentric old bachelor who immediately adopted that wonderful boy, and befriended the whole Boyd family.

But neither of these things, nor anything else remarkable, happened in the real story: which, as it is literally true, though told with certain necessary disguises, I prefer to keep to as closely as I can. Such wonderful bits of 'luck' do not happen in real life; or happen so rarely that one inclines at last to believe very little in either good or ill fortune, as a matter of chance. There is always something at the back of it which furnishes a key

to the whole. Practically, a man's lot is of his own making. He may fail, for a while, undeservedly; or he may succeed, equally undeservedly; but, in the long run, Time brings both its revenges and its rewards.

As it did to Donald Boyd. He has not been taken into Bethune and Co. as a partner; and it was long before he became even a clerk, at least with anything like a high salary. For Mr. Bethune, so far from being an old bachelor, has a large family to provide for, and is bringing up several of his sons to his own business, so there is little room for a stranger. But a young man who deserves to find room generally does find it—or make it;' and though Donald started at the lowest rung of the ladder, he may climb to the top yet.

He had 'a fair field and no favour;' indeed he neither wished nor asked for favour. He determined to stand on his own feet from the first. He had hard work and few holidays;

made mistakes, found them out and corrected them; got sharp words and bore them; learned his own weak points, and, not so easily, his strong ones. Still he did learn them; for unless you can trust yourself, be sure nobody else will trust you.

This was Donald's great point. *He was trusted.* People soon found out that they might trust him; that he always told the truth, and never pretended to do more than he could do; but that what he could do, they might depend upon his doing punctually, accurately, carefully, and never leaving off till it was done. Therefore, though others might be quicker, sharper, more 'up to things' than he, there was no one so reliable; and it soon got to be a proverb in the office of Bethune and Co.—and other offices too—'If you wish a thing done, go to Boyd.'

I am bound to say this, for I am painting no imaginary portrait, but describing an indi-

vidual who really exists, and who may be met any day walking about Edinburgh, though his name is not Donald Boyd, and there is no such firm as Bethune and Co. But the house he does belong to value the young fellow so highly that there is little doubt he will rise in it—rise in every way, probably to the very top of the tree—and tell his children and grandchildren the story, which in the main features I have recorded here, of how he first began Facing the World.

POSTSCRIPTUM.

This story, written some years ago, was, for various reasons, left unpublished. Alas! there is no need to keep silence now, for the boy has passed into 'the land where all things are forgotten.' But none who knew him will ever forget the brave, brief young life, and all the promise that it gave.

'Donald Boyd'—I will not give his real

name — died a few months ago, still only a boy, but leaving behind him the honourable memory of a reliable and lovable man. He was followed to the grave by the heads of his firm, and all his fellow-clerks, as well as by a crowd of devoted friends. Out of that too early grave—into the mystery of which we dare not look, for God knows best —let the dear dead boy speak to other boys, bidding them grow up like him, and fill the place in the world that he would have filled—but the Father called him home.

A PARIS ATELIER

SOME generations since it was considered unnecessary, not to say impossible, for women to work; in the last generation it was often necessary, but never quite 'respectable'; in our generation it has become, not only necessary, but essential; nay, even desirable. Whatever be the cause, undoubtedly in this nineteenth century a large proportion of our women, old and young, have either no masculine protectors at all, or such as are practically useless, if not worse than useless. And though nothing will ever abrogate the natural law, that women's work should be within the home if possible; still, when impossible, the work must be accepted and done outside.

Working women in all ranks, from our Queen downwards, are, and ought to be, objects of respect to the entire community.

Feeling this strongly, I started, one bright March morning, to investigate an atelier for female students on the south side of Paris. It was somewhat difficult to find, but at last I was directed to a courtyard, where, emerging from among some stunted, melancholy-looking shrubs, a woman pointed to a wooden stair, leading, she said, to 'l'atelier.'

I mounted, and boldly knocked at the door. It opened, disclosing a large room, full of artists—all feminine—not working, but scattered in groups, and chattering in several tongues, English preponderating, as only women, and young women, can chatter. They did not look particularly tidy, having on their working-clothes—an apron and sleeves grimed with chalk, charcoal, and paint—but all looked intelligent, busy, and happy. The

room was as full of easels as it would hold; and in the centre was a sort of rostrum, where the model, a picturesque old woman, sat placidly eating her morning bread and—I hope not garlic, but it looked only too like it.

The working woman may have a few undesirable characteristics, such as indifference to fashion, a tendency to rough hair and not over-clean cuffs and collars, but, take her for all in all, she is a much more interesting person than your idle butterfly, the fashionable young lady. These girls, for none seemed much past girlhood—were of all nationalities—English, American, French, German; and of all conditions in life. Some were pretty, some plain, some just ordinary; but I did not see one stupid face, or one bad face, among them, and all appeared cheerful, busy, and in earnest.

I went round the room, examining the

work, and politely hoping my presence did not interrupt it.

'Oh no! madame does not disturb us at all. We have been working ever since eight this morning. We are glad of a rest. So is Angela' (the model, to whom they all seemed very kind). 'We have the draped model in forenoons, the nude of afternoons. Monsieur' (naming the artist-head of the atelier) 'gives us instruction; perhaps two minutes each, but we learn most by experience and practice, and by criticising one another's work.'

This work seemed to me much above the average. A little rough, perhaps, being rapidly done, with broad effects rather than delicate finishing; but there was nothing of the lady-amateur about it. So far as it went it was real Art. The model, an old woman with a book on her lap, seemed as much interested in it as the artists themselves.

'She is a good old soul—Angela, and she sits capitally, but none of us can speak much to her. She is Italian.' At which I went up and said a few words to her in her own tongue.

The old woman, who, having finished munching her crust, was just settling herself, steady as a statue, with her book on her lap —started up, her two black eyes gleaming, and her yellow leathery face growing all alive with more than pleasure — ecstasy, 'The Signora speaks Italian! The Signora is going direct to Rome!' And in a perfect torrent of Italian Angela poured out her history; how she was over eighty, and had children and grandchildren in Rome, which she had left four years ago, and only hoped she might live to go back to it again. 'Roma, bella Roma! And the Signora is going there! Soon—soon?' added she, clasping her skinny, clawlike fingers on my arm, and

looking at me with a passionate pathos. Then, seeing the circle of easels already formed, she at once remounted to her place, reopened her book, and was again the mere model. Poor old Angela!

There are other models at the atelier—women only—as the students are exclusively women. But, as private models are expensive, the young ladies often sit to one another.

'If you will come home with me,' said the student I knew best, 'I can show you a portrait which we all think extremely good. We hope it may get into the Salon. Miss —— and I live in the same *pension*. While painting this picture she found she was spending her money too fast, so went up higher and higher, to the very top of the *pension*. There she finished it, in a tiny room you could scarcely turn round in, so I brought it down to my room to be on view.'

'Down' was only *au quatrième*, and 'my

room' not more than twelve feet square; but we found the picture a very clever one. It leaned against the wall, upon the brick floor, which was covered by a scrap or two of carpet.

The other furniture of my young friend's 'home,' as she had affectionately called it, consisted of a bed, a table, four chairs, and a small washing-stand and toilet apparatus. There was also a shelf, whereon stood a tea-pot, a cup and saucer, one or two plates, a vase with primroses and ivy-leaves, and a second saucer filled with earth, where the tiniest of cowslip roots was trying to put out a leaf or two.

'I hope it will grow. I dug it up in our country walk last Sunday,' said the mistress of the place. 'Yes, when I light the fire the room is very cosy. I had a tea-party of six here last night. When we give tea-parties we generally bring

our own teacups and chairs. At our *pension* we are all very friendly, being chiefly English and Americans. One girl is lucky enough to have her mother with her, the rest of us are mostly alone. As you say, if we were ill, it would be rather dreary, but we seldom are ill; we have no time for it. If we were, I am sure we should all be very kind to one another.'

I asked if they ever made acquaintance with the young men of the same atelier, or at least studying under the same artist.

'No; our work is quite separate. We seldom meet them, and if we did, we are too busy for any nonsense. Still, we girls find amusement in our own quiet way. Now and then we go to the theatre, when we can afford it, which is not too often. But you must admire the portrait; isn't it clever? and my view—the two towers of St. Sulpice—which I mean to paint some day. And look at my

kettle and my frying-pan, and my two presses, one for provisions, the other for clothes. Yes, indeed, I am exceedingly comfortable.'

And the girl, still only a girl, who not long before had been a rich man's daughter, surrounded by every luxury, stood, with mingled dignity and independence, pointing out all the good things she had, and maintaining a stoical silence on what she had not. A common story, doubtless only too common in that atelier. But the working woman, if not compelled to work too late in life, has a far happier life than that of the rich idler, who possesses everything and enjoys nothing.

However, better than any words of mine, will be what one of these girl-students says herself, in some notes which I asked her to make for me. I give them just as they are.

'For any girls coming to study art in Paris, to live as we do, in a quiet *pension*,

is far better and more economical than to board with a French family, unless we wish to master the language. Nothing can be more simple than our habits. We have one room, which is both sitting-room and bedroom, and we descend to dinner when we choose, not otherwise. We cook our own breakfast over a spirit-lamp at eight A.M., and go straight to the atelier, where we work till twelve. Then *déjeûner*, and work again till five P.M. Returning to our *pension*, we can go down to dinner in the *salle-à-manger* if we like, but more often we boil our own kettle, have tea and an egg, and spend the evening over a book. It does sound rather a monotonous life for us, and yet we all find it so very attractive, that the weeks slip by only too fast.

'Even the regular morning walk is pleasant. At this hour the Quartier Latin is filled with street-sellers wheeling their stalls

about, housewives marketing in their white caps, and little children in black pinafores being taken to school by their *bonne* or *garçon;* streams of men, too, on their way to business, a newspaper in one hand, and a roll in the other. Hard-working Paris is waking up to its daily life.

'Our atelier gives us every opportunity for the study of character, for in daily work together most people's natures are clearly displayed. There is the elderly spinster, prevented from study in her youth, and always envying the younger students who have their life before them. Beside her is a patient artist who has been toiling for years without making any visible progress, but who still hopes to succeed one day. Another, equally industrious, with her whole soul in her work, scorns such a small thing as outward appearance, and her dress, once æsthetic, looks like a worn-out *robe de*

chambre, slowly melting into a bundle of rags.

'But a few, who combine the love of fashion with the love of art, come here in costumes more suited to the Champs Elysées than to our crowded studio, where they are always in serious danger of rubbing against the palettes, knocking down the easels, etc.

'Then, of course, no atelier would be complete without its bore. She is generally elderly, and makes a practice of coming in late, and sitting down in the front rank, or before it, ingeniously contriving to conceal the model from the view of earlier comers, who naturally protest. Then the obscuring easel is removed by its owner with an air of long-suffering politeness—a few inches, no more, still annoying another victim, who, despairing of justice, moves away and begins work afresh, leaving the

bore in triumphant possession of the best place in the room.

'We have some interesting groups of friends. One pair might almost rival the Ladies of Llangollen. For seven years they have never been separated, and seem quite indispensable to each other. It is the clever one who is the most devoted; who carries the canvas, washes the brushes, arranges the easel, and, in short, does everything for her companion.

'But companionship is one of the pleasantest bits of our student life. Our frugal tea-parties are delightful. The hostess boils the kettle and sets the table, and we all sit round the fire and discuss the last exhibition, especially our own professor's work therein, or the success of one of us in getting into the Salon, which is held as a universal triumph to all. Conversation never flags, for some of us have lived at the ends of the earth, and

can describe them well; and others are political spirits, who belong to a debating society, and wish to reconstruct the world after their own pattern, which the rest good-naturedly but resolutely disapprove. Then where to spend our Sunday afternoons is always an important consideration. Nearly always we go out of town by road or rail, and after six days spent in the atelier and its close atmosphere, reeking with oil and turpentine, the smells, sights, and sounds of the country are only too delightful.

'Such are our pleasures; but, after all, the most interesting thing is our work. Every Monday we have the excitement of posing the new model. We begin enthusiastically; but on Tuesday, after the professor has witnessed our drawings, our high spirits sink a little. Lower still they get on Wednesday and Thursday; by Friday, when the second professor comes, they are usually

down to zero. Saturday finds us in deepest despair, only comforted by the resolution to do better next week; and that day is generally devoted to water-colour, or pen-and-ink sketches, or portraits of some picturesque fellow-student—usually kept as a souvenir when the time for leaving the atelier comes, and the girls who have been working together all winter go their several ways—to meet again, when and where, who knows? Probably never.'

But still they have done good work, poor girls, and mingled it with a great deal of innocent enjoyment. And though Paris is not a desirable place for a girl to live and study alone, still necessity has no law, and in community is much safety. These young students seem to go through the ordeal unscathed, and, so far as I could judge, without being unfeminised; for they are working women, and, as they honestly say, have 'no

time' for anything but work. It is idleness which breeds the follies, or worse than follies, of many young people—teaches them to substitute flirtation for love, and the craving after mere admiration for that devotedness which, however sad, is at least more noble than the selfish vanity of a conquering beauty. The busy life of a working woman may harden her a little, but it is not likely either to degrade or deteriorate her. And very often, in good time,

> 'If Love comes, he will enter
> And soon find out the way.'

But, should he never come, she learns to do without him, and will be all the happier and better woman for having put her life to useful account.

Therefore, as a help to the many girls who must work, and do work, I have given this simple, truthful, and faithful picture of how they work in a Paris atelier.

KISS AND BE FRIENDS

A WHITSUNTIDE WANDER

PART I.—DUBLIN

WHITHER should we go? That was the question. I meekly suggested 'To Ireland.'

Now, 'she's Irish,' has long been my family's tender excuse for certain failings of mine, which, let us hope, like some of my poor country's, lean to virtue's side. Especially a foolish habit of liking to be happy rather than miserable; and of fraternising and sympathising with my fellow-creatures, believing them all friends till I find them out to be foes. Also—is this Irish too?—an irresistible impulse to say a good word for the losing side. So we decided to follow

the Prince of Wales's example, and his footsteps, to that forlorn and much abused land of Hibernia.

Our English friends regarded us with wondering pity. Whether they expected us to be blown up with dynamite, or shot at from behind a hedge, I cannot tell, but they warned us of a cyclone that was coming—whence many other bad things for poor old Ireland do come—from America, and wished us safe back with impressive earnestness.

It did come, that cyclone. We heard it howling in the roofs of Chester Cathedral, we saw it shaking the apple-blossoms in the quaint old gardens by the walls, and bending the trees by the river-side; finally we had to take refuge from it in the sheltering 'rows.' But by the time the *Wild Irishman* had swept us through the pretty Welsh country to Holyhead, the sun shone so bright, and the steamer

looked so large and steady, that we felt it would be cowardly to linger. 'Faint heart never won,' or deserved to win, anything. We risked the voyage—and Ireland, and have never repented.

Had the Princess of Wales set her foot on Kingstown pier, and driven through Dublin streets in such a downpour as we did, she might have doubted that extraordinary physiological fact, 'Erin, the tear and the smile in thine eyes.' For it was no accidental tear, but a veritable influenza. Yet not an hour afterwards, when the warm Irish welcome had quite neutralised the unkindness of the Irish skies, they too cleared; and melted into the most lovely sunset, delicate aquamarine, with a pale yellow glow, such as no artist could paint, and very few ever see, except in Ireland.

But the cyclone was not spent. We woke to the wettest of wet Sundays, which mattered

little, as I had resolved to spend it in St. Patrick's Cathedral, of which, and the music, I had heard so much. Not untruly. Many years before, I had seen it in its melancholy neglected decay, before it was 'rebuilt with porter bottles,' as Irish wit chronicles its munificent restoration by one of the Guinness family. I half-expected to find, as often happens, that restoration had been ruination. But it was not so; all had been done in excellent taste. And as to the music, even after having heard the finest cathedral services in England and France, and the various *funzioni* of two Easters at Rome, I found it beautiful. Beethoven's 'Hallelujah,' from the *Mount of Olives*, part of Spohr's *Last Judgment*, and Handel's 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates,' were given with rare perfection. Indeed, for refinement and even balance of voices, accuracy and purity of singing, any music lover would find the choir of St.

Patrick's worth crossing the Channel to listen to;—which is saying a good deal.

And as for the sermons. Irish preaching is popularly supposed to be 'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' But Dean Reichel has added depth and solidity to his native force. Brief, terse, vivid, a clear skeleton of thought, clothed with the bone and muscle of language—very muscular language too; no mincing of matters in the smallest degree—the two sermons we heard from him that Sunday were a treat to listen to. Only, was it wise, was it necessary, in a semi-Catholic country, while explaining his own interpretation of the mysterious text, Christ's preaching 'to the spirits in prison,' that the Dean should abuse so vehemently the doctrine of purgatory, for which at least equal arguments may be found by its defenders? And in his afternoon discourse upon the text, 'Remove

from among you the accursed thing,' which was listened to by an enormous and dead-silent crowd, such as might have gathered under Luther or Savonarola,—could not the preacher's passionate denunciations of sin have been followed by as passionate an entreaty to sinners—'Why will ye die, O House of Israel?'

Can any human soul be driven out of hell and into heaven with a cat o' nine tails? was ever any doctrine enforced wholesomely by the blows of a sledge-hammer? I believe not. Yet unquestionably it was a most powerful sermon. And when, finally describing the state of a man, God-forsaken, in whom conscience itself is dead—which the Dean held to be the mysterious sin against the Holy Ghost—he lowered his voice and said, after a solemn pause, 'For this there is no repentance, either in this world, or in the world to come,' the hush

of awed silence which came over the dense congregation was something never to be forgotten.

All the more so, that they were, I grieve to say, by no means a well-behaved congregation. Before service, they chattered, stared about and smiled in a most objectionable way. Two ladies especially, whose age should have taught them better—I hope they will read this paper and remember the indignant rebuke of another old lady, who hates the desecration, by chattering, of any house of music; doubly so when it is also the House of God.

Two more ladies evoked a little harmless moralising. One was a regular type of the 'untidy Irishwoman,' her handsome, ill-made sealskin jacket hanging on her broad back like a sack; her bonnet, all flowers, feathers, and jet beads, stuck on the top of a mass of hair, soft, fine, with scarcely a

grey thread in it, but looking as if it had not been combed for a week. Her clothes altogether seemed to have been 'thrown on with a pitchfork'—and yet her large, fat, foolish face wore a look of contented enjoyment. Very different was the face beside her—clear-cut, worn, and rather sad, the silvery hair laid smoothly over the forehead. Her bonnet, close and comfortable, and her mantle, of very common materials, but well-fitting, neat, and whole, completed the picture of the 'tidy Irishwoman.'—Some of the very tidiest women I have ever known have been Irishwomen! I speculated on these two, and thought what a curse one must be, and what a blessing the other, in some unknown home!

An Irish home! Novelists of a past generation—Miss Edgeworth, Lever, Lover—have painted it for English amusement, pity, or contempt. And more than one

modern writer, notably the author of *Hogan, M.P.*, has done the same, using the wonderful power of Irish wit and Irish pathos, to make error funny, and evoke sympathy, not merely with sorrow but with actual sin. All may be true enough, the recklessness and the poverty, the outward gaudiness and inward squalor. But is Ireland the only country where exists that miserable habit of putting the best on the outside, and living for show, not reality? where everything is allowed, morally and physically, to go to rack and ruin for want of that 'stitch in time' which 'saves nine'—that systematic order, economy, punctuality which form the very keystone of all home honour and home happiness?

I have seen in wealthy England and prudent Scotland homes which answered to this wretched picture, and in Ireland homes just the contrary. Not rich, it is

true—nobody is rich in Ireland—but where a noble economy makes all needful comforts attainable, where to dress simply and live carefully are things neither to shrink from nor be ashamed of, while to spend time, thought, and all available money upon the poor and needy, is a self-sacrifice so natural that none regard it as such; where the heads of the household are its guides and helpers as well as its rulers, and the servants would almost die for 'the family'; where Catholic and Protestant live together in harmony, the landlord going among his tenants, needing no protection from policeman or revolver, and the mistress taking her rounds of charity at any hour of the day or night, as safe and as honoured as any Catholic nun. I am painting no ideal picture. Such homes exist, and while they do, there is hope for poor old Ireland.

But to our wanderings. We seemed des-

tined to end them in despair. Rain, rain, nothing but rain. It swept alike down the wide handsome Dublin streets and the miserable Dublin slums, where the Prince and his son won everybody—as we heard on all sides—by the kindly word and smile which, to the warm Irish heart, is better than gold. One expedition we made—to Phœnix Park—perhaps the finest, as it is much the largest park of any European city. We looked first at the Viceregal Lodge, hidden in its trees, and then, within sight and hearing of it, at the tiny cross marked with pebbles in the roadway, which records one of the darkest tragedies of modern times—the murder of Cavendish and Burke.

Truly our English nobles must have something intrinsically noble about them to go about day by day face to face with possible death; for months the Lord-Lieutenant never stirred out without a military escort,

each with a drawn sword in his hand and a revolver in his pocket. Why should he leave his safe, wealthy home and easy life, if not for the sake of duty? No one can look in the Viceroy's face, so full of care and yet full of kindness, without feeling that whatever the disloyal may say, it is the face of an honest, generous, and kindly man. His adversaries should at least give him the benefit of the doubt.

Despite of rain, hail, and bitter cold, more like January than the near-approaching June, we determined to pursue our Whitsuntide wander. It is the heart, not the weather, which makes the holiday. And so we left Dublin, and started for a country place, where our welcome was sure.

Ireland's picturesqueness lies in its coast-scenery. Its centre is mostly a dead level of bog or pasture-land. There are few or none of the smiling harvest fields which

make England so pretty; the climate refuses to grow cereals, and, alas! the people have not the persistent industry required for cultivated farming. Neat hedgerows, well-kept woodlands, good roads, and, above all, the sweet contented-looking villages and hamlets that one sees continually in England, must not be looked for here. Yet it was a green and pleasant country that we swept through —no, crawled through—Irish railways always crawl—and, reaching our station at last, we mounted the familiar outside car with its lively Irish pony. Excellent animal! that day he did forty miles in sixteen hours.

Does any one know how delightful it is to drive across country in an outside car, with just enough necessity for holding on to keep your mind amused, and just enough jolting and shaking to give you 'the least taste in life' of horse exercise? How pleasant to feel the wind in your face, and see

the rain-clouds drifting behind you—to catch in passing the sights and scents of moorland gorse, of ditch-bank primroses, and hidden hyacinths, and the yellow gleam of whole acres of cowslips! I never did see so many cowslips! a sign, alas! of poor land. When the soil improves the cowslips disappear. And for birds—there seemed a blackbird in every tall tree, and a dozen larks singing madly over every bit of common.

But of human habitations there were very few. Now and then a group of little Kerry cows—mostly black—or a family of happy pigs, often black too, dotted the pastures, implying another family close by, who turned out to gaze at us from what might be either cabin or cow-shed, or both—half-clad boys or girls, one could hardly tell which, with wild shocks of hair and splendid Irish eyes, full of fun and intelligence. And sometimes we passed a woman with a shawl over her head,

Irish fashion, carrying a huge bundle and perhaps a child as well, who looked at us an instant, then looked away. Thin, poverty-pinched faces they often were, but neither coarse, sullen, nor degraded, nothing like the type of low Irish that one sees in towns. Much to be pitied truly, but certainly not to be despised. Some, perhaps, dropped a curtsey to 'the quality,' but, generally, they just looked at us with a dull curiosity, and passed on. Little enough have 'the quality' done for them, poor souls!

Every two or three miles we came upon handsome lodge-gates and lodges, marking the entrance to beautiful parks, and saw, gleaming through the trees, the 'big house,' deserted and going to ruin. Two-thirds of the landlords in this county are absentees.

'Sometimes,' we were told, 'they spend a few weeks here—we meet them at dinner-parties, but they always come protected, and

very often it is only the ladies of the family who venture out at all. In the bad times, generally our carriage was the only one that was waiting without a policeman on it.'

What a picture! Whose fault is it? That of the ignorant masses, or the educated aristocracy?—the 'fathers and mothers' of the land, who might as well expect to bring up their children 'with a kiss and a blow, alternating with the indifference of total absence, as think to find Ireland a prosperous country when landowners thus forsake it.

I am no Home-ruler, no Parnellite. I loathe the agitators who, chiefly for their own ends, and for the love of excitement and notoriety, play upon the affectionate, impulsive Irish heart to its destruction. But I own, when I looked at these grand mansions, or pleasant country-houses, slowly dropping to decay, and thought of what such are in England—the centre of that educating inter-

course and generous sympathy between rich and poor, which is an inestimable benefit to both—I felt that 'the finest peasantry on earth,' as I once heard their champion O'Connell call them, have a good deal to complain of.

Not all. Not in that oasis of the desert, that haven of peace where we took up our brief rest. But this trenches on the sanctity of private life, so I will pass it over.

Part II.—Killarney

—And only the most persistently punctual of people could ever have got there! To start at 7.30 A.M. from a bright breakfast-table, drive ten Irish miles in pouring rain, and wait anxiously at a small comfortless station, where of course the train was late—and it took a frantic struggle to catch the Killarney train at all—was an expenditure of more courage and strength than one could well

spare. But it was done. And though we laughed at our own folly in calling this a 'pleasure' excursion, and repeated inwardly the old Scotch song, 'Why left I my hame?' —(why indeed!) still there we were, and we must make the best of it.

We did; and were rewarded. About Limerick Junction the clouds began to break, and by the time we had passed through the dull, dreary, level country which lies between it and Killarney, the skies had cleared, and burst into that passionate mingling of storm and sunshine which is the charm of a mountainous country, especially when that country is Ireland.

Tourist raptures are always objectionable, but when one has seen the Swiss, Italian, Scotch, and English lakes and still finds Killarney lovely—there must be something in it. 'Lovely' is the right word—not grand, or startling, or gloomily sublime, but full of a

lovable loveliness, that warms and soothes the spirit more than I can express. When, after a pleasant walk, through masses of yellow gorse, among orchises and primroses, and under avenues of stately trees, we sat down on the soft dry sand of the lake shore, and looked across at the Toomies and Purple Mountain—truly purple, of the deepest hue of hills after rain—it seemed as if we had left the world behind us at an immeasurable distance, and that this was a place where all life's storms would cease.

'And our hearts, like thy waters, be mingled in peace.'

And yet it is only a day and a half, easy journeying, from London! Would that many a tired London-dweller, needing a brief repose, and, dreading the worry and discomfort of going abroad, would try it.

There are three excellent hotels at Killarney—The Lake, the Railway, and the Victoria, which latter we chose, as it was

farther out of the town. Nor did we ever regret our choice.

As this paper is meant to exemplify its title, and as nothing makes one love a country like knowing it, also because the simplest means of civilising a country is to plant on it, at intervals, comfortable hotels, where travellers can 'rest and be thankful,' as at this one at Killarney—I do not hesitate to say a good word for the Victoria.

It is built on Lord Kenmare's land, and its visitors have the privilege of going anywhere about the Kenmare grounds. Beautiful architecturally it is not. Outside it looks something like a barrack, but inside its arrangements are admirable. 'Most un-Irish,' sarcastic Saxons would say, in its order, cleanliness, punctuality; but in the essentially Irish qualities of kindliness, politeness, and pleasantness, it may favourably compare with any hostelry we ever visited.

It has, too, most of its resources within itself. The dear little Kerry cows feeding in the twilight fields implied milk, cream, and butter *ad libitum;* the hens clucking at early dawn, awoke a hope of new-laid eggs; and we watched our future dinner carried past the windows in the shape of an enormous newly-caught salmon. Unpoetical facts these, but they greatly add to the advantages of a holiday wander. 'We shall be almost as comfortable as at home,' said we. And we were.

We had only two days to 'do' Killarney, so we set about it systematically. Day the first —Torc Waterfall, Mucross Abbey and woods, the middle and lower lake with its islands. Day the second—The Gap of Dunloe, the upper lake, the Long Range, and back to the lower lake, on whose shore was our hotel. This programme covered most of what we wished to see, and the intelligent landlord arranged it for us—as he will for any tourist

—with cars, boats, boatmen, lunch, everything most easy and comparatively inexpensive, for there was no bargaining and no extortion.

A slight shower fell as we drove through Killarney town, with its shabby dreariness, and its groups of idle chatterers standing at street corners. Oh! if Irish men—and women—would only spend in working the time they waste in talking, what a different country theirs might be!

Torc Waterfall was—well! not grand but very pretty. And Mucross Abbey was like most old abbeys, except for a stately yew-tree in the cloisters, which, with a peculiarity rare among yew-trees, had refused to shoot out a single branch till fairly above the walls, and then spread out into a splendid tree. An omen, may it be, of poor old Ireland, if ever she can attain God's free air and light, unencumbered by prejudice on one side and superstition on the other.

Hope seemed to dawn, as we noticed the exceeding neatness and aspect of cultivation in the Mucross property, and heard what good landlords the Herberts were, how 'the masther' knew every tenant on his estate, and how his mother and sister used to visit all the sick and poor. And though he was then in America, Mr. Herbert never forgot anybody, and everybody looked and longed for his coming back. If he had only been there when the Princess came! and could have shown her the old abbey, and got her to plant trees as the Queen did for his father, when she was little more than a girl—six flourishing young oaks, that promise to last a thousand years. The Princess planted nothing, but she seemed to admire the place extremely. 'And she gave me a real gold sovereign, bless her purty face!' added the guide. Her giving it herself seemed to touch his old heart as much as the sovereign.

Everywhere we found that the sweet looks of the Princess, the kindly geniality of the Prince, had left a vivid impression; and while driving through Mucross Woods, and rowing to the Wine-cellars and the Colleen Bawn island, where, as London playgoers know, Danny Mann tried to drown Eily O'Connor, it was pleasant to think how our royalties must have enjoyed it all, and how it possibly taught them that the sad face of Ireland could be made to smile. And will—when landowners learn to live, though never so simply and economically, upon their own land and among their own people, instead of leaving their tenantry to the mercy of any mischievous agitator, who tries to persuade them that all their misfortunes are wrongs, and that English misgovernment is at the bottom of it all. Possibly; yet neither a human being nor a country ever falls under the curse of mis-

government if it knows how to govern itself.

We shared in the universal opinion that the best thing which could happen to Ireland would be a royal residence, such as was spoken of for Prince Albert Victor, and where, if he imitates his parents at Sandringham, his example would prevent more evil and do more good than any Crimes Act, for it would shame back the absentee landlords, cause them to spend in Ireland the money now wasted in London, Paris, and heaven knows where, so that in course of years — the evil of generations cannot be remedied in a day—the desert might rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Killarney does. Though decidedly 'nature with her hair combed'—it is combed so skilfully as to be almost imperceptible. The magnolias, hydrangeas, and eucalyptus trees, and especially the great woods of self-

sown arbutus, look as if they had sprung up of their own accord. We glided past them softly as upon a summer sea, till suddenly one of our boatmen threw a rug over us to keep out the spray, and then we found ourselves tossing like a cockle shell upon waves which needed experienced oarsmen to face at all.

It is often so. Sudden storms come down from the mountains, making navigation so risky that sailing-boats are never allowed on the lakes of Killarney; but the boatmen are equal to all other emergencies. They are a very fine race; our two, an old man and a young one, were as handsome as Venetian gondoliers, and as courteous. We did not wonder that the stroke-oar had been chosen to row the Princess's boat, and was among the fortunate number for whom the Prince had left twenty pounds.

Many a bit of pleasant and funny gossip

did they indulge us with, as they pulled us into smooth water and landed us, nothing loth, upon 'sweet Innisfallen,' Moore's 'fairy isle.'

It is indeed a fairy isle. That May evening which might well have been preceded by the lovely May morning when the O'Donoghue rides across the lake, with his ghostly train —shall we ever forget it! Beautiful Innisfallen! in its total solitude and silence, except for the sheep browsing on the green turf, and the thrushes singing in the great ash-trees, what a dream of delight it was! and always will be — like that 'bower of roses by Bendemeer's stream.' For we all have, or have had, some 'calm Bendemeer'; some paradise, realised or not, where the nightingales sing 'all the day long,' and will sing until the brief day of life is over and done.

Sweet Innisfallen! the old monks did well to set up their rest here. In the time when

the Angelus was rung, and the mass was sung, in these now ruined walls, how civilising, if nothing more, must have been the influence of these men, who kept the flame of learning alight amidst pitchy darkness and did such exquisite work as the Book of Kells, which we saw in Trinity College, Dublin—strange remnant of so many nameless, long-forgotten lives, which yet must have been useful in their generation.

As I took the bit of 'real Irish shamrock' which our old boatman (who remembered Daniel O'Connell, and so did I) brought me as a votive offering from Innisfallen, how I wished that when orange despises green, and Catholic abhors Protestant, both parties would recall the fact that they spring from one common ancestor — the ancient church, which for several hundred years was Ireland's only defence against total barbarism.

The Gap of Dunloe had yet to be done. It was, I own, rather heavy on our minds. Nine miles on an outside car, five miles on the back of a pony, fourteen miles through the lakes in a boat, were a serious trial to quiet folk decidedly past their youth. Had the weather been doubtful we might have meanly shirked the expedition, but the May morning rose gloriously; we could but wish ourselves well through the day, and start.

An intelligent American at the *table d'hôte* —many Americans take Killarney *en route* from Queenstown—warned us of the nuisance of beggars. And sure enough as soon as we reached Kate Kearney's cottage—that lovely young woman 'who lived by the banks of Killarney' has much to answer for!—they bore down upon us in shoals, offering stockings, milk, 'potheen,' and then entreating shillings and sixpences with the most shameless persistency; for they were not ragged

beggars, but very respectably clad. It was easy to believe the American's story, that yesterday, when he said he had not got a sixpence, they offered to change his half-sovereign!

Determined to be rid of them, I tried first moral suasion, which signally failed, then a volley of rapid French, which so amazed them that they retired for the moment; then to a woman, who had run after the ponies for about half a mile, an indignant reproach: 'I am Irish, and you make me ashamed of my country. What would my husband say to me if I went gadding about like this, instead of doing my work indoors? Go home, and do *your* work.'

'Deed, ma'am, and maybe you're right,' was the good-humoured answer, and whether from conviction, or because they saw no chance of getting out of me a single halfpenny, the beggars stopped. But as long as silly tourists amuse themselves with the weak-

nesses of the lazy Celtic nature, so long will Irish beggars exist, to the disgrace of themselves and their patrons, who first encourage and then abuse them.

The Gap is fine, though not finer than many a Scottish glen; but the upper lake is very picturesque, and the Long Range, a river five miles long, into which you pass by an all but invisible outlet, is most beautiful. It ends at the old Weir Bridge, in a rapid which is shot so skilfully that you never notice the danger till it is past; yet a few inches of swerving on either side, and the boat would be dashed to pieces, and the strongest swimmer whirled hopelessly in the current, as has more than once happened. When the Prince was here, they told us, he was entreated to get out and walk past the rapids; it would indeed have been a woful catastrophe for the future king of England to be drowned at Killarney.

He must have seen a good deal, and thought it over a good deal—our sensible, practical, kindly Prince of Wales, but I doubt if he ever saw a sight like that which met our eyes next morning when, after looking our last on the lake with a sore heart, and thinking how sad more hearts must be who have to leave 'the sod' for ever, we found the station filled with a crowd of people, come to bid good-bye to some emigrants, bound to Queenstown by the same train as the one by which we were just leaving Killarney.

Those departing were chiefly women, a dozen or so, probably sent for by their friends; the amount of money which reaches Ireland yearly, to bring out friends and kindred to America, is, we were told, enormous. They all seemed tolerably cheerful, and were extremely well-dressed—in fashionable jackets, hats, earrings, and, above all, new kid gloves, with which they shook the

bare rough hands of everybody they came near. But the friends had the ordinary dress of the south of Ireland peasant, with shawl or cloak drawn over their heads; many of the faces, men's as well as women's, were swollen with crying, and every few minutes some one or other fell on the necks of the emigrants, sobbing broken-heartedly.

The Saxon nature never can understand the unrestrained emotion of the Irish, who weep, not silently, but out loud, like children. Hodge, now, would have said good-bye with a shake of the hand, or perhaps one shame-faced kiss, and so parted in the most common-place way—for ever. But Paddy wails aloud, and never thinks of hiding his poor tear-sodden face. His quick sympathies extend far and wide; for miles, at every cottage whence the train was visible, stood groups waving some poor rag of a handkerchief. And the platform of Killarney Station was literally crammed.

What stories one might have imagined! There was one farmer-looking lad, who, hid in a corner with his lass, was beseeching her to be faithful; the tears ran down his cheeks in streams, but hers were quite dry, and she seemed much occupied with her brown velveteen 'costume' dress, and her hat covered with spangles: I have my doubts as to that young woman's fidelity. There was only one family group—a woman, carrying a huge bundle on one arm, and a baby on the other, while an elder boy staggered under a little sister, scarcely smaller than himself. The mother had a quiet, sad, determined face, and with her shawl over her head, might have sat for a *Mater Dolorosa.*

Indeed the whole type of face among these poor people was very fine, indicating infinite possibilities for the race. Nor was there any squalid poverty, or actual dirt. The young men were stalwart, honest-looking fellows,

and the girls had a decency and modesty of manner, which not all their exuberant grief could take away. Watching them I quite believed what I had lately been told by one who had had large experience among the Irish poor, that, as is proved by the registrar's records, that the Irish girl's standard of moral purity is far higher than that of her Scottish or English sisters.

True, in Ireland there are no end of early imprudent marriages; boys and girls scarcely out of their teens hastening to flood the country with helpless little paupers; but they are virtuous and healthy paupers, far less harmful than those wretched abortions of vice and misery which we see, not only in our town streets, but in our agricultural districts. These hapless Irish peasants who, though starving in miserable mud cabins, manage to lead pure lives, keep the rash marriage tie unbroken, and bring up their

girls and boys as honest as themselves, might they not be made into the strength and defence of the country, instead of being drained out of it, carrying its best blood to enrich another land?

In truth, the saddest thing to see in Ireland is the enormous waste of valuable material, and the misapplication of it to base uses. Many a worse man than that half-civilised savage, Myles Joyce of Maamtrassma, may live unhung; and perhaps more than one of those poor fellows, for whom wives and mothers knelt praying outside Kilmainham Gaol, while the black flag was floating inside it, might have been an honest, good fellow at heart, and died in his bed, a decent valuable citizen, if only he had not been exposed to those malific influences which are always at work in Ireland, and which to the impressionable Celtic nature are especially dangerous.

Irishmen are, in their good points and their bad, exceedingly like children; and they need to be guided and governed like children; but it should be the loving control of a parent, not the despotic rule of a hard task-master, as has so often been the case. And, above all, they should be taught—woe betide all parents if they do not teach this to their children!—to control and govern themselves. May Ireland's future ruler, who has lately seen with his own honest, parental eyes of what it is capable, lay this maxim to heart!

I may be accused of painting *couleur de rose*, but I do so intentionally. There are enough writers ready to put into the picture the very blackest hues, or worse, those glaring eccentric colours that are at once so funny and so false. I know all Ireland's faults; the laugh which, God help the poor souls! is heard in the midst of misery, and gives the

impression that this misery is unfelt; the reckless improvidence, the almost childish habit of lying, for it is often more like puerile imaginativeness than deliberate untruth; the vehement prejudices, the ridiculous pride, and love of outside show, which has ruined thousands of families. But I also know Ireland's virtues; its strong purity, its staunch fidelity, its quiet endurance of hard fortunes, its self-respect and self-denial. The possibilities of good in it are infinitely greater than its proclivities to what is bad.

If any happy future is to come, the reform ought to be social, not political, and to spring from the upper not the lower class. The Prince of Wales's visit has done more to turn the heart of Ireland towards England than all the legislation of the last twenty years. Why should not the heart of England turn towards Ireland? Why should not tourists go and investigate it, and by demand create

supply, so as to bring English gold into its poverty-stricken districts? Nay, might not adventurous capitalists risk a little, both in coin and comfort, by buying land there and starting some useful industries? The great complaint of the people is that there is absolutely no work to do. They are obliged to leave their country, because if they stayed in it they would starve. Why not keep them there — they are safer in Ireland than in America — by offering them the practical, sisterly help of wealthy, orderly, industrious England, given in a kindly way, with a cool head, warm heart, and wisely open hand?

In the hope of this, a day which we may never see, but perhaps our children may, I have written my paper, and called it 'Kiss and be Friends.' I end it with a few words of advice to Protestants and Catholics, Government Officials and Home Rulers, Nationalists, Conservatives, Fenians, Parnellites,

and the whole set of demagogues, small and great, who trade upon both the vices and the virtues of the Irish character. Those words are written by their own Tommy Moore, who, amidst all his foolishness, sometimes said a wise thing or two, and, Irish like, always said it in the most charming way:

'Erin, thy silent tear never shall cease,
Erin, thy languid smile ne'er shall increase,
Till like the rainbow's light,
Thy various tints unite,
And form in Heaven's sight
One arch of peace.'

THE END

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Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018